tion of Islam in the 15th century, John was not only one of the most productive and innovative proponents, but also one of the main pioneers. By the early 1430s and even before, Islam had already become an important issue in his copious and broad theological work. Over several decades before the fall of Constantinople, he had made repeated efforts to obtain reliable information on Islam. During the Council of Basel, he discussed these subjects with Nicholas, as they both recalled nearly 20 years afterwards. John's voluminous treatise *De gladio divini spiritus*, written soon after the catastrophe of 1453, and his new trilingual edition of the Qur'an elaborated together with the Muslim faqīh Içа Gidelli are outstanding scholarly works and documents of this innovative thinking in the 15th century, even though in general he shares the main characteristics of the late medieval world.

The main sources[5] on the relation between John and Riccoldo are:

- *Errores legis Mahumeti* (various excerpts from the *Alkoranus latinus*, most probably begun during John's first reading of the Qur'an in 1437 in Basel or shortly afterwards)
- *Epistula ad Nicolaum de Cusa* (2 December 1454)
- *Replica magne continencie ad Iohannem Cabilonensem episcopum* (long letter to Jean Germain, 18 December 1455)
- *De gladio divini spiritus mittendo in corda Sarracenorum* (begun in 1453).

When did John become aware of Riccoldo's work? It cannot be determined whether or not John was already familiar with *Contra legem* when working on his *Errores* in the years before 1450. One excerpt from sura 2:223 which could be taken either directly from Riccoldo or indirectly from a gloss alluding to Riccoldo's translation is formu-

5 The texts are available in:
Johannes de Segobia, *Errores legis Mahumeti*, ed. Bündgens *et al.* 2013.
Johannes de Segobia, *De gladio divini spiritus*, Roth 2012. Quotations will be given with chapter number (Consideratio) and line number.
Johannes de Segobia, *Epistula ad Nicolaum de Cusa*, ed. Scotto 2012 (partly ed. Cabanelas Rodríguez 1952).
Johannes de Segobia, *Replica magne continencie ad Iohannem Cabilonensem episcopum*, ed. Scotto 2012 (partly ed. Cabanelas Rodríguez 1952).
For more details about the origin and content of these texts see my introduction to *De gladio* (ed. Roth 2012) or the valuable, although not always up-to-date information in Wolf 2014.

lated in a fashion that points towards Riccoldo and his *Contra legem*.[6] It reads differently in his *Tractatus seu disputatio contra Saracenos et Alchoranum*, which is widely indebted to Ramon Martí's *De Seta Machometi*.[7] The same passage is copied almost verbatim in *De gladio*, Consideratio 9, ll. 43–48 with only a slight variation or specification, namely: "Ut vero aiunt quidam, passus iste in Arabico expressius et clarius describitur."[8] This passage is found in Riccoldo, *Contra legem* 6, ll. 40–41: "Mulieres uestre aratura uestra, arate eas ut uultis."[9] It should be noticed that "aratura" in *Contra legem* and "a natura" in John's texts can be explained as a reading or a writing mistake because of using abbreviations. The formulation "aiunt quidam" or "quidam asserunt" could be a hint to Riccoldo; however, the plural form could also confirm that John thinks of a gloss to his *Alkoranus latinus*, where somebody had annotated this way to translate this Arabic passage. We know that John had read the copy of the *Alkoranus latinus* which John of Ragusa had brought from Constantinople where it had been copied in 1437 and which was the exemplar for Theodor Bibliander's print of 1543. In this manuscript Robert of Ketton's translation was corrected or commentated in the margins or at the end of the text.[10] From this single citation we cannot with certainty conclude whether, how much and since when John knew of Riccoldo and his *Contra legem* in the years before 1450.

The first evident and clearly datable hint to John's knowledge of Riccoldo can be found in his *Replica* to Jean Germain: "Even the predicant mentioned, as I suppose, in your letters, who said he had been at the university of the Saracens, did not say that. Indeed, I have his treatise written in 17 chapters and many others in Latin and vernacular

6 Cf. Johannes de Segobia, *Errores*, ll. 200–204: "De abusu autem mulierum dicit: Mulieres vobis subiectas penitus pro modo vestro, vbicumque volueritis, parate Deum timentes, ad quem omnium fiet reditus, qui bonis premium, malis cruciatum tribuit. Vt vero quidam asserunt, passus iste in Arabico sic dicit: Mulieres vestre a natura vestra arate eas, ubi uultis."

7 Cf. Ricoldus de Monte Crucis, *Tractatus seu disputatio contra Saracenos et Alchoranum*, ll. 211–212: "Mulieres vestrae sunt aratio vestra. Ergo intrate arationem vestram, quocumque modo volueritis."

8 Johannes de Segobia, *De gladio*, Consid. 9, ll. 46–47.

9 Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, *Contra legem* 6, ll. 40–41 (ed. Mérigoux 1986, p. 84).

10 Cf. Johannes de Segobia, *Epistula ad Nicolaum de Cusa* (V 9rv; ed. Scotto 2012, p. 15): "Nondum vero habui [sc. translationem in idiomate nostro], sed habui librum qui Constantinopoli, ut apparet, correcte fuit scriptus, dum illic Iohannes de Ragusio remansit. In glosis quod in nonnullis veritati pepercit non exprimens quantam sermo arabicus habet legis illius obscenitatem. Aliquas eciam postillas habet declarantes quorundam passuum obscuritatem." John received this manuscript from Basel, where he himself had seen it in the library of the Dominicans, cf. to this complex history *De gladio*, ed. Roth 2012, XXXVII–XXXVIII. As John had sent the manuscript back to Basel, Beatus Rhenanus was able to see it in Basel and Bibliander to make use of it for his print.

Hispanic with me, one recently sent instead of the book Qur'an, really large in size, but the person who wrote it only read little in the Qur'an, attributed many things falsely to it, and inserted a lot of other fables."[11]

The *Replica* dates from 18 December 1455, and alludes in this passage to a part of the letters which the bishop of Chalon sur Saône, chancellor of the Order of the Golden Fleece and advisor of the duke of Burgundy Jean Germain, had sent him in 1455. Unfortunately, these letters, also mentioned in a shorter letter from 18 December 1455, are lost. John confirms that he possesses Riccoldo's *Contra legem*. Maybe he had received it very early, for example, in Basel. It is also possible that John already had read *Contra legem* in 1454 when he corresponded with Nicholas, as he mentions the falsification of scriptures in his letter of 2 December 1454 and later associates it with Riccoldo.[12] As he calls it "novus tractatus"[13] in his correspondence with Jean Germain, it is likely that he had obtained in the time before the end of 1455, possibly together with the *Alkoranus latinus* from the Convent of the Dominicans in Basel or different writings he had received after further inquiries in 1455 from Spain which he alludes to in the letter to Jean Germain. Among these writings there was also one of Pedro Pascual (*c.* 1327–1300), mistakenly thought to be a translation of the Qur'an.[14]

WHICH WORKS DID JOHN KNOW?

John possessed *Contra legem* even some years before the famous manuscript collector Nicholas of Cusa, who had provided him with writings during the Council of Basel and with whom he exchanged letters in 1454. It is likely, but not certain, that John was familiar with other works such as *Liber peregrinationis* or *Ad nationes orientales*. At the

11 Johannes de Segobia, *Replica magne continencie* (V 58r; ed. Scotto 2012, p. 121): "Eciam nec dicit ille predicator vestris ut estimo mencionatus in litteris qui dicit se fuisse in Studio generali Sarracenorum. Tractatum quippe eius XVII capitulis expletum aliosque plures penes me habeo in latino vulgarique yspanico unum novissime destinatum pro libro Alchoran quasi tanti voluminis, sed qui edidit parum per Alchoran legit multa illi falsa imponens aliisque plurimis insertis fabulis."

12 Cf. Johannes de Segobia, *Epistula ad Nicolaum de Cusa* (V 27v–28r; ed. Scotto 2012, p. 63): "De falsificacione autem ut quidam dicunt Christianis imposita per eos, multiplicatissima et habundans Deo auxiliante aderit satisfactio …" See below, note 26.

13 Cf. Johannes de Segobia, *Replica magne continencie* (V 71v–72r; ed. Scotto 2012, p. 153): "Subiungit autem, quod testatur quidam novus tractatus, apud Baudas locum caliphe Studium generale est erectum et secta Mahumeti ad formam doctrine auctentice composite et reducta per inquisicionem et discursum scientificum."

14 Cf. Johannes de Segobia, *Epistula ad Johannem Cabilonensem* [18 December 1455], ed. Cabanelas Rodríguez 1952, p. 326.

end of *De gladio* he writes about Muslim universities,[15] in a passage with three interesting pieces of information: the existence of a kind of university in Baghdad, the public financial support for students, and the existence of a supreme faqīh. The first two could have been taken from *Contra legem*,[16] but the third rather resembles passages that can be found in the *Liber peregrinationis* and not in *Contra legem*.[17]

At the end of *De gladio*, John gives several pieces of advice that resemble the *Regulae*[18] of Riccoldo at the end of his *Ad nationes orientales*. These will be discussed later. As the *Regulae* were sometimes transmitted separately, it is possible that they, too, were known to John. Thus, one can assume that John not only knew *Contra legem*, which he mentions directly, but maybe also the *Liber peregrinationis* and with even less probability the *Regulae* though he never mentions them explicitly as separate writings. None of these texts is mentioned in his *natio* written in 1457, the year before his death.

15 Johannes de Segobia, *De gladio*, Consid. 38, ll. 497–507: "Quod utique sustentamen Sarraceni non facile habent, quando, ut multi affirmant, non habent nisi unum generale studium quodque tam minimum est Sarracenorum desiderium ad scientiam capescendam, quod inibi expensis communibus multi et fere omnes advenientium sustentantur. … Sistente igitur tanta apud Sarracenos penuria et generalium studiorum et virorum, in illo unico, sicut dicitur, etiam communiter residet primus ac supremus Alfaquinus eorum ad eumque per omnes Sarracenorum reges principes ac communitates super materia legis fit recursus." Similar ideas can be found in John's *Replica magne continencie* (V 71v–72r; ed. Scotto 2012, p. 153): see above, note 13.

16 Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, *Contra legem*, prol., ll. 57–58 (ed. Mérigoux 1986, p. 62): "Vnde cum transissem maria et deserta, et peruenissem ad famosissimam ciuitatem Saracenorum Baldaccum, ubi gererale ipsorum solemne habetur studium, ibi pariter linguam et litteram arabicam didici." Cf. idem, ch. 13, ll. 99–102 (ed. Mérigoux 1986, p. 121): "Quod aduertens quidam Calipha de Baldacco … edificauit … scolas solemnissimas et reformauit studium Alchorani et ordinauit quod de quibuscumque prouinciis uenirent in Baldaccum ad studium Alchorani, studentes haberent cellas et stipendia necessaria de comuni …"

17 Cf. Ricoldus de Monte Crucis, *Liber peregrinationis*, ed. Kappler 1997, pp. 154–160: "In eadem ciuitate scilicet in Baldacco fuit sedes et principalitas Sarracenorum quantum ad studium et religionem et quantum ad dominium. Ibi enim regnabat Califfa quod interpretatur successor, scilicet Machometis, et dicunt Sarraceni quod ipse erat facies dei in terra … in loco generalis studii … Et ut multa paucis uerbis comprehendam, sciendum est quod ipsi conueniunt in Baldacco ad studium de diuresis prouinciis; habent autem in Baldacco plura loca soli studio et contemplationi deputata ad modum magnorum monasteriorum nostrorum et uenientibus prouidetur in communi …"

18 Cf. Dondaine 1967, pp. 168–170.

CONTENT AND METHOD

John's rhetoric, or rather his method, in respect to Muslims strongly opposes traditional missionary and especially violent activities against Muslim nations. Therefore, conformity and similarities with Riccoldo are more superficial than deep.[19] Looking at the major contents and the tenor of their works, the theological background and fundament are clearly different. Many individual subjects may be similar or even the same, but the general aim is different, for example, the idea of a *contraferentia* and that of an unwanted though unavoidable coexistence of the different religions.

Riccoldo makes some positive observations about Muslim society and piety, but John goes further still. He appreciates and believes in their real thirst for understanding and knowledge, as his different conception of the relationship between faith and knowledge would naturally lead him to do. However, generally speaking, John considers Riccoldo to be one of the earlier Christian authors who do not evaluate Islam according to the main source, that is the Qur'an. These authors either based their conclusions on a few excerpts or they were not able to grasp its true meaning. In John's opinion, Riccoldo was no exception.[20] John even reproaches him for not having finished his translation of the Qur'an, using the excuse that the content was too disgusting. John almost becomes angry because of this lack of respect of a Christian scholar for the religious tradition of the Muslims. John's point of view is not motivated by the presupposition of an intrinsic value of the Islamic tradition, but by the experience that such disregard and arrogance would be a hindrance to any negotiations. It would make talks even more difficult or completely fruitless, and confronting Muslims in this way could strengthen their prejudices towards Christians. In this context, John quotes a Muslim

19 Cf. Vigliano 2017, p. 287: "... elle [la rhétorique de l'adresse aux musulmans] concorde pour une bonne part avec les règles édictées par Riccoldo da Monte Croce.", p. 289: "... *Contra legem Sarracenorum*, que notre théologien [i.e., John of Segovia] consulte volontiers. Riccoldo inspirerait alors son unique et modeste tentative pour systématiser sa rhétorique, par quatre recommandations numérotées. La vraie originalité du *De gladio*, de ce point de vue, est de détourner les méthodes missionnaires au profit d'un discours opposé aux missions."

20 Cf. Johannes de Segobia, *Replica magne continencie* (V 58r; ed. Scotto 2012, p. 121): "Etenim, sicut vestra dominacio attestatur, si aliqui legem Mahumeti impugnarunt hoc fuit solum per modum excerptorum. Dicam ego et unum aliud quod multos perlegi tractatus, dyalogi et alias formas habentes, adhuc tamen nec vidi unum omnino conformiter ad librum Alchoran in omnibus suis excerptis dicentem. Eciam nec dicit ille predicator vestris ut estimo mencionatus in litteris ..."

proverb about Christians in Spain: "They paint as they like". He compares this way of refuting Islam with a game of chess against oneself, a useless and uninteresting game.[21] Believing that in order to kill the Sirens, one has to approach them, rather than just remain at a secure distance,[22] John attempts to avoid this type of self-deception or auto-immunization and improve on his behaviour. He collected all available material on Islam and even employed a Muslim faqīh (Içа Gidelli) not only to help him to make a new Latin translation, but also to provide him with a reliable introduction into the Islamic creed.[23] In his own way of working he also tried to avoid the mistakes of the authors he criticized; thus, John widely excerpts from and quotes the Qur'an. When he realized that his Latin translation was not reliable, he initiated a new and complete translation and with the help of his faqīh he worked on his famous, so-called trilingual Qur'an. He even started to revise his voluminous *De gladio* with this new translation, but had to stop due to illness and other works, and perhaps because he realized that the sheer volume might hinder him from completing it in his lifetime.

MATERIAL TAKEN FROM RICCOLDO

Concerning "Islamica", John relies on the *Alkoranus latinus* and the historical work of Vincent of Beauvais, some other chronicles, several works from the so-called *Collectio Toletana*, especially Petrus Venerabilis and the so-called *Apology of pseudo-Al-Kindi*. Nonetheless, Riccoldo is an author who is more or less directly present in John's works. The way John selects material from *Contra legem* corresponds with the critical estimation he has for this author. This can be shown best with the long and only verbatim quotation taken from *Contra legem*. It relates to the miracle of the scission of the

21 Cf. Johannes de Segobia, *Replica magne continencie* (V 58r; ed. Scotto 2012, p. 122): "De quo non miror nec de predicatore illo quia ipsemet fatetur pre abhominacione non potuisse intendere ad completam libri interpretacionem, sed et illud animadvertitur quod huiusmodi impugnaciones fiunt absque parte. Unde in Yspania commune est proverbium Sarracenos in derisum adversus Christianos dicere quod pingunt sicut volunt. Est utique forma hec ludentis ad scacos semet cum ipso, qui pro suo libito vincit aut vincitur. Quo circa michi gaudium permaximum est invenisse contradictorem, cuius omni cum humilitate graciam deposco ut continuare dignetur." Cf. Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, *Contra legem*, prol., ll. 61–63: "Et cum inceperim eam in latinum transferre, tot inueni fabulas et falsitates et blasphemias, et eadem per omnia in locis creberrimis repetita, quod tunc attediatus dimisi ..."

22 Cf. Johannes de Segobia, *De gladio*, Praefatio, ll. 83–239, esp. l. 94.

23 Cf. Wiegers 1994.

moon. John quotes seven lines word by word.[24] But he is not interested in Riccoldo's translation, even though it could be considered more reliable as a result of Riccoldo's experience and excellence concerning the world, language and literature of Arabia: all Qur'anic verses concerning miracles are as usual taken from Robert of Ketton's translation. John is not interested in the translation, but rather in the interpretation of the miracle by Muslim authors, an aspect that he only finds in Riccoldo's work. Riccoldo in turn had taken this from his main source for the knowledge of Islam, the so-called *Liber denudationis* or *Contrarietas Alfolica*. Apart from this quotation, John alone structures and writes his long chapters about miracles in the Qur'an: *De gladio*, Consideratio 26 about miracles in general and Consideratio 27 more specifically about the miracle of the Seven Sleepers. The way he investigates and validates the importance of miracles for Islam and its law also originates in John's own hermeneutical approach, although the subject itself is discussed extensively by Riccoldo, for example, in *Contra legem* ch. 7.

Thus, it is not surprising that John takes hardly any material directly from Riccoldo. Among the occasional material one finds, for example, John's mention of the caliphate. John knew about this institution from *Contra legem* and he supposes that it prevented Muslims from converting to other religions by means of fear and oppression.[25] An-

24 Cf. Johannes de Segobia, *De gladio*, Consid. 26, ll. 118–124, taken from *Contra legem* ch. 4, ll. 54–62 (Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, ed. Mérigoux 1986, pp. 78–79), cf. the introducing and commenting passages ibidem, Consid. 26, ll. 116–117 and 124–126: "Quo vero ad tertium narratum miraculum de lunae divisione expositio praemittitur, quam, ut scriptum reperii, faciunt Sarracenorum doctors dicentes … Consona profecto textui glossa: Talis quidem fabula talem meruit expositionem, ut prae textu irrisione sit dignior."

25 Cf. Johannes de Segobia, *Replica magne continencie* (V 58r; ed. Scotto 2012, p. 123): "Illa racio forte que precipua est nunc accurrit, quia cum secundum eorum legem semper eorum propheta sit unus per successionem Mahumeti locum tenens, semper se remittent ad illius iudicium, quod in Iudeis non contingit nullum dominum habentibus temporale utque ille predictor in suo dicit tractatu apud maiores Sarracenorum agendum est ceteris omnibus illi sua iudicia submittentibus." In Ricoldus de Monte Crucis, *Liber peregrinationis*, the caliph as "successor Machometis" is mentioned, but not the expression "semper se remittent ad illius iudicium." However, the idea of suppression could easily be deduced from Riccoldo's notes, cf. *Liber peregrinationis*, ed. Kappler 1997, pp. 154–156 (as above, note 17).

other point is the argument of the falsification of the scriptures (*taḥrīf*). He clearly indicates that he had read this in Riccoldo's book, most probably *Contra legem*.[26]

Further material that John seems to treat with respect to Riccoldo can be found in the four *avisamenta* at the end of *De gladio*, a kind of rule set for Christians on how to address Muslim dialogue partners. These more or less general pieces of advice are de facto more than four, as each point is often divided into two or three sub-items.[27] Some of them apparently correspond to Riccoldo's *Regulae* and are quite similar. Looking more at the details, however, one can easily see that John neither copies nor even follows Riccoldo and no direct quotation can be identified.[28] Still, it cannot be excluded that John had read the *Regulae* and was inspired to conclude his work with similar advice of his own. It becomes clear that John transmits some basic features of his own theory on how to explain the Christian creed to non-Christians and how to determine the relationship between faith and reason in general, which would rarely be developed or accepted by Dominican friars.

The four pieces of advice are:

- advice I: not to discuss and to debate the tenets of faith through interpreters
- advice II: to deal with the Saracens with honesty and respect
- advice III: to address the leading persons, not only the lesser-ranking ones, as they are the only ones allowed to discuss subjects relating to law and belief
- advice IV: to be prudent not to explain the great truths of faith to those who cannot accept them and would deride or ridicule them according to Matthew 7:6, "do not cast your pearls before swine"; to be firmly convinced that faith is not contradictory to reason and science, but corresponds with divine reason.

Advice I is similar to Riccoldo's *regula* I, but the latter is more concrete, especially in the consequence, namely to learn Arabic and its dialects. As John had direct experi-

26 Cf. Johannes de Segobia, *De gladio*, Consid. 32, ll. 174–178: "Ut autem legi in parvo quodam libello praedicatoris unius, qui dicit se moratum diu inter Sarracenos, ubi viget studium eorum, et cum eis plures habuisse collationes de lege, Sarraceni Christianis imponunt falsificasse evangeliorum librum." Cf. Ibidem, Consid 29, ll. 223–227. *Contra legem* is also called *libellus* in Vat. lat. 4071, f. 29r, but *tractatus* in *Replica magne continencie*, cf. above, note 11. The subject of the corruption of scripture is discussed in *Contra legem*, ch. 3, ll. 22–43 (Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, ed. Mérigoux 1986, pp. 71–72); Riccoldo mentions his sojourn in Baghdad in *Contra legem*, prol., ll. 56–61.

27 Cf. Johannes de Segobia, *De gladio*, Consid. 38, ll. 431–563.

28 Vigliano 2017, pp. 287–296, esp. 289, assumes a more direct dependence of John from Riccoldo with respect to the *Regulae* and the systematization of his method which cannot be confirmed in this article.

ence in talking to Muslims and it was a well-known fact that merchants were unable to translate matters of faith, one cannot deduce much from this similarity. Advice II, often repeated and reflected in John's works, is not represented in the *Regulae*, however Riccoldo reports frequently on polite customs and the use of the honorific in the Orient. *Regula* IV proposes "eis loqui reverenter et humiliter", but only because of the hypocritical nature of the Orientals, not because they were misled and blinded to the truths of the Christian faith.[29] Advice III and IV are covered entirely by the content of *regula* IV, but do not share its presuppositions. *Regula* V, an exhortation to the future missionary, has no equivalent in John's *avisamenta*, apart from the general hint that the legates should have a clear knowledge of the matters of faith that should be explained. However, that is not mentioned in his four *avisamenta* and it is not explained in as much detail as in *regula* II (Christian expositions) and *regula* III (knowledge about Christian denominations) about the scholarly preparation that missionaries need in order to talk to the Oriental Christians Riccoldo mainly aims at. Obviously, John could have developed the *avisamenta* on his own, as they are more or less explicitly rooted in his theology and personal experience.

In sum, there is little material taken from Riccoldo. While John of Ragusa's passages about Muslim belief were nearly completely drawn or paraphrased from Riccoldo, John of Segovia followed the translation of Robert of Ketton. He always mistrusted Riccoldo to a certain extent. Even when he questioned the translation by Robert with which he had worked, he did not recourse to Riccoldo as an expert. He started right from the beginning with a completely new translation made by a Muslim, not by a Christian with the help of a Muslim, as Robert did. Nor did John content himself with the various partial translations that he found in works by Christians. In this respect, John seems to be a kind of pre-humanistic scholar with an eagerness to obtain the best possible available sources, which seemed to exclude the writings of Riccoldo, in John's opinion.

This is due to the fundamental difference in their theological background and the completely different methodology of mission and interreligious discussions. John had become acquainted with the Dominican theory of anti-Islamic disputation in his early years. In his *Repetitio de fide catholica* from 1427, he quotes Thomas Aquinas and his *Summa contra gentiles* I 6 or refers to material he obviously read in Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum historiale*, both Dominicans.[30] As his Dominican confrère Ramon Martí, Riccoldo directly and indirectly depends on Thomas Aquinas. This is well established and can easily be verified by the many quotations one can find, such as, for example, in

29 Cf. Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, *Ad nationes*, *regula* IV: see Dondaine 1967, p. 169.

30 Cf. Madrigal Terrazas 2004, pp. 223–225.

Contra legem ch. 1, l. 100, he quotes from the same source as Ramon Martí, i.e., Thomas's *Summa contra gentiles* I 6, as John will do more than hundred years later. In *Ad nationes orientales* it is again the *Summa contra gentiles* that is used for different passages.

John never supported or even accepted the Dominican method. According to him, faith and reason or science are compatible in the same act.[31] That results in a completely different methodology of mission. In *Contra legem* ch. 2, Riccoldo shows that one cannot prove the belief in the divine Trinity. With Isaiah 7:9, "nisi credideritis, non intelligetis", he confirms that some Christian tenets can only be proposed and shown by relying on the Bible, not by demonstrating them with reason. Therefore, one has to first destroy the Islamic revelation in itself and bring its prophet into discredit; second, prove the reliability of the divine scripture; and third, show the Christian tenets on the basis of scripture as authority.[32] John is actually in accordance with Riccoldo's first step.[33] Yet, he clearly reflects that this first step cannot be accepted by someone who still casts doubt on the Christian faith and is convinced of the truth of his prejudices. Therefore, John insists on a respectful way of dealing with Muslims, not because he thinks that there is much truth in the Qur'an, as Nicholas might think, but because this respect is the only reasonable, practicable and Christian way to convince Muslims of the Christian truth. However, according to John, Riccoldo's second step is not inevitable. John displays a different conception of belief and reason. This makes it superfluous to prove the divine origin of Christian scripture. Therefore, the argument of the falsification of the Christian scripture surprises John, but he does not dwell very long on refuting it because it is of no systematic importance for his missionary strategy. Of course, John does not reject Isaiah 7:9, but he believes that through reason one can

31 Cf. Johannes de Segobia, *Repetitio de fide catholica* (ed. Madrigal Terrazas 2004), p. 205: "Prima est quod habitus fidei et habitus scientiae possunt simul esse. … Et secunda propositio quod habitus scientiae est compossibilis cum actu fidei." Cf. the different conception in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I–II q. 1, a. 5.

32 Cf. Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, *Contra legem*, ch. 2, ll. 18–21 and 63–65: "Et licet non habeamus rationes ad probandam Trinitatem et alia que sunt fidei, quia tunc fides non esset fides, nec meritoria, habemus tamen auctoritatem Euangelii cui et Alchoranus dat testimonium, et habemus miracula. … insistendum est ad confutationem tam perfide legis, et ostendendum quod non sit lex Dei, et quod Saraceni tenentur recipere auctoritatem Euangelii et ueteris Testamenti."

33 Cf. Johannes de Segobia, *De gladio*, Consid. 29, ll. 177–179 and 184–187: "Non vero sic est de secta Sarracenorum, siquidem negato, quod Mahumet fuit verus propheta dei, nullam aliam scripturam habent, per quam hoc intentum suum probare valeant. … Etenim cum tota eorum secta dependere videatur ex eo solum, quod affirmant Mahumet fuisse dei verum prophetam, ut verisimiliter creditur, nullatenus audire vellent, quoscumque in principio locutionis blasphemantes prophetam suum."

access the main Christian tenets. Christian dogmata are accessible and provable by divine reason which is beyond the capacity of human reason and should not be confused with it, though human reason can follow and unfold the rationality of divine reason. Thus, the most important step in practice, if not in theory, is not the destruction of the Islamic revelation, but respect for the sincerity of their believers in order to open the way to discuss Christian faith by reason, not by authority (*auctoritates*). Only an honourable way of dealing with them as religious actors will open their minds and their hearts to hear those arguments that could destroy their false prejudices about the Christian faith, and then motivate them to follow those arguments taken from reason alone that will prove the Christian truths and then make them reject deviating opinions.

Together with Riccoldo and many others, John is convinced that the Qur'an is the work of Satan, and that the prophet is his instrument. But this theory requires a different practice. John no longer considers Muslims simply to be devilish and wicked, as he did in his *Repetitio de fide catholica*, but deceived and misled. John's general theological standpoint opens for him a way to deal with Muslims as potential Christians, that is "via pacis et doctrinae", and to open the idea of Christian council even to those more notorious heretics. John repeatedly points out how the Council of Basel had successfully negotiated with the Hussites who at that time were considered as heretics and who were compared with the Muslims not just by coincidence.[34]

NICHOLAS OF CUSA

Nicholas of Cusa came into contact with Riccoldo's work very late in his intellectual career, specifically in his last ten or even five years.[35] We cannot thus claim that Riccoldo was an important author to him, at least not compared with Raimundus Lullus, Dionysius Areopagita, Meister Eckhart, Proklos and many others. *Contra legem Sarracenorum* is in fact the only of Riccoldo's works that Nicholas mentions in the foreword to his *Cribratio Alkorani*: "Vidi post hoc Romae libellum fratris Ricoldi Ordinis praedicatorum, qui Arabicis litteris in Baldach operam dedit, et plus ceteris placuit." (*Cribratio*, prologus, n. 4).[36] *Contra legem* is also the only work preserved

34 Cf. Soukup 2013; Wolf 2014, pp. 111–114; Roth 2021.

35 On Cusanus and Islam, see esp. Hagemann 1976; Euler 2010; Pasqua 2013; Levy *et al.* 2014.

36 The *Cribratio Alkorani* is quoted according to Nicolaus de Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani*, ed. Hagemann 1986.

in the manuscripts that can be traced back to Nicholas and his famous library.[37] As Nicholas normally tried to obtain most of the oeuvre of an author he appreciated, it seems likely that he had never read more than this one work of Riccoldo. Apart from the marginalia to his manuscript of *Contra legem*, the references in the *Cribratio* and some marginalia to the *Alkoranus latinus*, which José Martínez Gázquez recently identified in the Vatican manuscript Vat. lat. 4071,[38] we do not have any other material to determine what Nicholas knew and thought about this Dominican friar over 150 years older than himself and how much he had read of him. According to his writings, the only work he had read was *Contra legem*. It is most probable that Nicholas had no access to other works by Riccoldo, especially not *Ad nationes orientales* or its *Regulae*. If his exemplar of *Contra legem* traces back to the manuscript Vat. lat. 7317, which contains *Contra legem* and the *Epistulae ad Ecclesiam Triumphantem*,[39] one could speculate whether he had seen these letters. However, there are no hints to be found in his works to suggest this to be the case, and the chronology of Nicholas's knowledge of Riccoldo opposes it.[40] In addition, the *Liber peregrinationis* does not play any role in his argumentation.[41]

WHEN DID NICHOLAS FIRST COME INTO CONTACT WITH THE WORK OF RICCOLDO?

A copy of *Contra legem* is to be found in Codex Cusanus 107, at the end of the codex, after *Contra perfidiam Mahometi* of Denis the Carthusian (about 1402–1471). As Denis finished his lengthy opus on Islam before the death of Pope Nicholas V (1447–1455), we can presume that the copy of *Contra legem* was only added to the work of Denis some years later. According to Mérigoux, the copy of *Contra legem* could depend on the manuscript Vat. lat. 7317, an enormous collection of "Islamica" dating from 1458 and belonging to the library of Cardinal Domenico Capranica

37 Cf. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 194r–232r. At the present state of knowledge, one cannot determine if this manuscript is the one he had seen in Rome or if it only is a copy. There are many marginalia from Nicholas's own hand and their content and context are closely connected to the *Cribratio*, so one could hardly imagine Nicholas to have annotated this manuscript after having finished writing the *Cribratio*.

38 Cf. Martínez Gázquez 2015; 2016.

39 Cf. Dondaine 1967, p. 133.

40 George-Tvrtković (2012a, p. 41) thinks of some similarities of the *Epistulae* and *De pace fidei*, but without precise arguments. The same holds true for her article 'After the fall' (2012b).

41 Costigliolo (2010, pp. 339, 347) points to the traits Nicholas gives the Tatars in *De pace fidei* which could indicate a relation to this text. But she herself refers to difficulties this assumption would provoke.

(1400–1458), who died on 14 August 1458.[42] Cusanus claims to have seen Riccoldo's work in Rome. He arrived in Rome in the summer of 1458 after having left his diocese of Brixen. If Nicholas added any marginalia in Capranica's manuscript, it should be examined in future studies, but Mérigoux gave no indication about this and the digitized version of the manuscript seems to show no marginalia at all.[43] Of course, Nicholas intended to supply Pope Pius II with information about Islam and with his own idea of how to deal with it. Therefore, scholars normally dated the *Cribratio Alkorani* to be finished before the letter of Pius II written for Mehmet II, which was finalized after September or October 1461. As he mentions the *Tractatus* of John of Torquemada, which was completed in 1459, the *Cribratio* should accordingly be finished after 1459 and before October 1461.[44] Yet, no traces of the *Cribratio* can be found in the letter of Pius II. In Vat. lat. 4071, Nicholas indicates when he commentated this manuscript which he used for the *Cribratio*: "Nota quando liber fuit translatus: 1143. Sunt nunc 1462."[45] From this note one could even infer that Nicholas accomplished the *Cribratio* very late, maybe even after autumn 1461 and after the letter of Pius II, so he would not have been able to influence Pius II directly. However, Nicholas seems to have read Riccoldo, if one follows his summary in the *Cribratio*, after Denis, but before John of Torquemada, and so a date before 1459 is indicated.[46] A second examination after a first reading could have happened when working on the *Cribratio* and writing the marginalia in Vat. lat. 4071.

As he had read a couple of lengthy books about Islam, including the *Alkoranus latinus*, Denis the Carthusian and the *Rescriptum Christiani et Sarraceni*, and also shorter works such as Thomas Aquinas's *De rationibus fidei*, it is remarkable or even astonishing that he ranks Riccoldo higher than these authors, all the more as there are fundamental divergences between his own and Riccoldo's general concepts and methods

42 Some information about this manuscript and Riccoldo can be found in Weltecke 2007.

43 See http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.7317.

44 Cf. Nicolaus de Cusa, *Cribratio* (h VIII), pp. XIII–XIV.

45 Cf. Martínez Gázquez 2016, p. 474, n. 4.

46 Cf. Nicolaus de Cusa, *Cribratio*, prol., n. 4, ll. 1–8, h VIII, pp. 6–7: "Demum concitavi fratrem Dionysium Carthusiensem, ut scriberet contra Alkoranum; qui fecit et misit opus suum magnum Nicolao papae. Vidi post hoc Romae libellum fratris Ricoldi Ordinis Praedicatorum, qui Arabicis litteris in Baldach operam dedit, et plus ceteris placuit. Vidi et aliorum fratrum de ea materia scripturas Catholicas, maxime sancti Thomae de rationibus fidei ad Cantorem Antiochenum et ultimo reverendissimi domini cardinalis sancti Sixti [sc. Johannis de Turrecremata] haereses et errores Mahumeti vivis rationibus confutantis." "Demum – post hoc – ultimo" seems to indicate a chronological order.

regarding the understanding of Islam, as will be shown. His high regard for Riccoldo can be inferred from several of his remarks:[47]

- "quidam sapiens …": *Cribratio*, I, ch. 4, n. 29, l. 2 (h VIII, p. 29)
- "quidam devotus et Arabicae linguae peritus, qui in Baldach studio Akorani operam dedit …": *Cribratio*, I, ch. 5, n. 37, ll. 6–7 (h VIII, p. 35)
- "quidam peritus": *Cribratio*, I, ch. 6, n. 40, l. 7 (h VIII, p. 37)
- in the marginalia, Cusanus refers to him more briefly and technically as "frater Riccoldus" (Vat. lat. 4071, ff. 29r; 33r).[48]

MATERIAL TAKEN FROM RICCOLDO IN THE *CRIBRATIO*

Nicholas probably never met a Muslim in person. Although he was interested in these subjects and had already attempted to get direct and reliable information about this religion before and during his voyage to Constantinople in 1437, his knowledge was meagre compared to the first-hand information of the expert and missionary Riccoldo. As a consequence, much of the material on Islam, the Qur'an, Muhammad and the Near East is taken from Riccoldo. From the very start of his *Cribratio*, Nicholas depends on the help of *Contra legem* when he discusses the differences in sura numbering systems between the Latin tradition of Robert of Ketton and the general Arabic tradition in the beginning of *Cribratio*, I, ch. 1, n. 20 (h VIII, p. 21).[49] Working on his own translation of the Qur'an from Arabic via Spanish, John was no longer interested in this characteristic of Robert's translation.[50] Riccoldo explains the Arabic numbering of the suras in *Contra legem* ch. 11, ll. 19–27, from sura 2 up to sura 5, both by numbering them and by quoting their Arabic name. More than other authors, Riccoldo must have been the expert and specialist in Islamic studies in Nicholas's eyes. There are other suras whose names are cited according to Riccoldo in the *Cribratio*. Besides sura 2 and sura 3 we find 'Elmeide' ("desk") (sura 5; *Cribratio*, I, ch. 5, n. 37, l. 7, h VIII, p. 35), taken from *Contra legem*, ch. 16, 'Eluael' as "palm tree" (*Cribratio*, I, ch. 4, n. 29, l. 15, h VIII, p. 30, taken from *Contra legem*, 6), and 'capitulum prophetarum' (*Cribratio*, II,I, ch. 3, n. 170, l. 2, h VIII, p. 137, taken from *Contra legem*, 7). Yet, where Riccoldo does not provide the necessary information, Nicholas is not able to identify the sura appropriately. The sura of the Seven Sleepers which is not named in *Contra legem* is

47 Cf. Martínez Gázquez 2016, p. 488.
48 Cf. Martínez Gázquez 2016, p. 479, n. 18, and p. 491.
49 Cf. for the philological background Castells Criballés 2007.
50 Cf. the text of his *Praefatio in translationem,* in Martínez Gázquez 2003.

therefore called 'capitulum septem dormientium' in *Cribratio*, III, ch. 10, n. 190, l. 2 (h VIII, p. 152), although this is not the correct Arabic name (sura 18, *al kahf*).[51] With the *Alkoranus latinus*, Nicholas was not able to give the correct names of these suras by his own. He even quoted the Qur'anic verse 5:46 twice, according to *Alkoranus latinus* (*Cribratio*, I, ch. 5, n. 36, ll. 9–11, h VIII, p. 34) and *Contra legem* ch. 16 (*Cribratio*, I, ch. 5, n. 37, ll. 7–10, h VIII, p. 35; cf. Codex Cusanus 107, f. 229r).[52] Because of the great differences in the two translations and his limited knowledge of the Qur'an, Nicholas was not able to identify these passages as two translations of the same text. Characteristically, this is the only quotation from the Qur'an taken from Riccoldo; for the rest, Nicholas always draws from Robert of Ketton. Nicholas did not try to reconstruct the true wording of the Qur'an, for example, by comparing the text of *Alkoranus latinus* with the quotations in *Contra legem* and the *Epistula Saraceni* (pseudo-Al-Kindi). Reading and studying Riccoldo and other writings about Islam, especially those which seemed to deliver first-hand material, never led Nicholas to question the reliability of the *Alkoranus latinus* or that of his other sources, and so in this respect we should not call Nicholas a humanist. John of Segovia was far more critical or even sceptical towards his sources, And it was he who on the one hand was far more deeply rooted in traditional theological thinking than Nicholas, but who on the other hand developed his biblical philological accurateness to a new kind of humanistic philological criticism. Thomas Burman summarized this trait as "the oscillation between polemic and philology."[53]

In the *Cribratio Alkorani*, many different observations or remarks can be traced back to Riccoldo, while only a few, mostly concerning Muhammad and his life, to pseudo-Al-Kindi. Among them there are several of Nicholas and Riccoldo's prejudices, such as: "multi sapientes eorum secrete evangelium summa devotione amplectuntur" (*Cribratio*, I, ch. 6, n. 40, ll. 5–6, h VIII, p. 37); "sapientes eorum sciunt, quod falsitas Alkorani de facili deprehenderetur, si ad legendum sacros et veraces dictos libros admitterentur" (*Cribratio*, I, ch. 6, n. 40, ll. 8–10, h VIII, p. 37; *Contra legem*, ch. 15); "deo ... mendacium adscribi ... in Alkorano pro maximo peccato habetur" (*Cribratio*, I, ch. 7, n. 43, ll. 14–16, h VIII, p. 39; *Contra legem*, ch. 12); "quendam Califam Christianum crucem in secreto pectoris continue portasse ac philosophos Alkoranum deridere" (*Cribratio*, II, ch. 1, n. 87, ll. 11–12, h VIII, p. 73; *Contra legem*, ch. 13). Following Riccoldo, but misinterpreting him, Nicholas assumes that a caliph still reigns in Baghdad, whom he addresses personally at the end of his work (*Cribratio*, III, ch.

51 Cf. Nicolaus de Cusa, *Cribratio* (h VIII), p. 227, n. 84.

52 Cf. Nicolaus de Cusa, *Cribratio* (h VIII), p. 227, n. 84.

53 Burman 2007) p. 186; cf. Roth 2014, p. 557.

18, n. 224, ll. 3–12, h VIII, p. 178; *Contra legem*, ch. 16). He is said to prohibit lectures on philosophy and the Christian gospel (*Cribratio*, II, ch. 1, n. 87, ll. 8–10, h VIII, p. 86). "Lord" ("dominus") is the main name of God for Muslims who are not able to distinguish the use of this title for God from its use as a salutatory address (*Cribratio*, Alius prologus, n. 12, ll. 10–15, h VIII, p. 14; *Contra legem*, ch. 9). Sometimes, different sources seem to form a common ground for Nicholas's concepts. Qur'an means collection or "praeceptorum collectio" (*Cribratio*, I, ch. 1, n. 20, l. 3, h VIII, p. 21), which is confirmed by "collectaneum preceptorum" in *Contra legem*, prol. ll. 47–48, Mérigoux, 62, but Petrus Venerabilis already had called it "collectio praeceptorum."[54] The same is true about the tradition that four different Qur'ans had once existed (*Cribratio*, I, n. 21, ll. 4–8, h VIII, 22; *Contra legem*, ch. 13, but also pseudo-Al-Kindi). Yet, the explanation of the name Furqan as "separation" is taken from the *Doctrina Machumeti* (*Cribratio*, I, ch. 1, n. 20, l. 4, h VIII, p. 21) because there is no equivalent in *Contra legem* to explain this word.

The whole chapter *Cribratio*, I, ch. 4, h VIII, pp. 29–33, 'Quod Alkoranus fide careat, ubi sacris scripturis contradicit', relies in many points on *Contra legem*, ch. 6 and 9. A long quotation is taken verbatim from *Contra legem*, ch. 6, ll. pp. 62–71. While Riccoldo tries to demonstrate the Qur'an to be self-contradicting, Nicholas only illustrates Muhammad's dependence on several non-Arabic, namely heretic or Jewish, teachers. They are said to have provided him with views and narrations in the Qur'an that conflict with Christian truths even today. He learns from Riccoldo that Muhammad was illiterate and that his language skills were limited to the Arabic language (*Cribratio*, I, ch. 4, n. 29, ll. 2–11, h VIII, pp. 29–30; *Contra legem*, ch. 6). This is closely connected with another set of problems, that is to say, the inconsistency of the Qur'an and Islamic doctrine as a whole.

As to the aim of Muhammad's preaching, Nicholas tends to follow Riccoldo. Confronted with the fact that his mission to both Jews and Christians was going to fail, Muhammad, who was convinced of being the foretold of the New Testament (cf. John 14:16 and 14:26, and sura 61:6), is said to have been inclined to react with violence. Nicholas adopts this common position in Christian anti-Muslim polemic from Riccoldo's *Contra legem*, ch. 9. He also attests this idea by quoting a non-Qur'anic verse taken from ch. 7, ll. 41–44, "Iussit deus me gentes gladio expugnare" (*Cribratio*, II, ch. 3, n. 168, ll. 7–8, h VIII, p. 136), together with other material taken from the Qur'an via Riccoldo (*Contra legem*, ch. 6, 7 and 9). When repeating these reproaches (*Cribratio*, III, ch. 8, n. 184, ll. 2–4, h VIII, p. 148), he makes use of different sources. Many medieval authors, including Petrus the Venerable, were able to endorse his conclusion:

54 Cf. Petrus Venerabilis, *Summa totius haeresis*, n. 1, l. 15 (ed. Glei 1985, p. 2).

> But you have seemed to me, oh Muhammad, to have sought the power of dominating under the pretext of religion. For you reduce all [matters] to the sword; and even by the sword you strive to obtain tribute.[55]

But Nicholas is not willing to follow Riccoldo—and with him most medieval Christian writers—in proclaiming that neither God nor Muhammad is the main author of the Qur'an, but the devil himself (*Contra legem*, ch. 13). Nicholas annotated many passages in his exemplar in Codex Cusanus 107, but not this statement. He does not follow Riccoldo in this radical idea. Of course, Nicholas excludes the possibility of God being the author of the Qur'an based on the many errors he finds in it. One striking example for him is the name of Maria's father who is not Imram or Amram, but Joachim (*Cribratio*, I, c. 4, n. 32, ll. 8–14, h VIII, p. 32). This piece of information is taken from *Contra legem*, c. 9, ll. 119–129. Nicholas tried to elucidate the reason for the strange mingling of the name Mary or Miriam with that of the sister of Aaron, thus seemingly confusing the sister of Moses with the mother of Jesus. This puzzling problem challenged an enquiring mind such as that of Nicholas. Even today, it can only be solved—whether or not convincingly is a matter of debate—by introducing further assumptions. One of the lengthiest passages he writes in the margin of the *Alcoranus latinus* in Vat. lat. 4071 deals with this very issue. Nicholas already discussed this in the Codex Cusanus 108, f. 37r.[56] But it was obviously Riccoldo's expertise in the Qur'an and Arabic which leads him to his conclusion. In Vat. lat. 4071, f. 32r, he even replaces the name Joachim with Amram in the Latin text of the Qur'an and he notes in the margin to sura 3:33–35: "vxor Ioachim. verus textus dicit Amram." The final statement, that the original text has Amram, i.e., Imram, must have been deduced from Riccoldo. At the end of sura 2, Vat. lat. 4071, f. 31v, Nicholas notes: "Intitulatur soret Amram. et quidam libri habent hunc tertium capitulum (c. *abbrev*.) et ita secundum de vacca durat usque huc." The identification of sura 3 as sura Al Imram is repeated in *Cribratio*, I, ch. 5, n. 35, ll. 4–5, h VIII, pp. 34–35: "in principio V capituli

55 Cf. Nicolaus de Cusa, *Cribratio* (h VIII), III, ch. 8, n. 184, ll. 2–4, p. 148, and the list of possible sources for this assumption (translation according to Jasper Hopkins): "Sed visus es mihi, o Mahumete, praetextu religionis dominandi potentatum quaesivisse; omnia enim in gladium resolvis et gladio saltem ad tributum pervenire contendis."

56 Codex Cusanus 108, f. 37r: "de Joachim et Anna et sancta Maria filia", and another marginal written at a different time with another quill: "nota quod alibi legitur textum dicere sic uxor Amram et cetera et fuit Amram pater Mariae sororis Moisi / et reprehenditur iste liber de mendacio et ignorantia in hoc per prudentes." Maybe "prudentes" hints to experts like Riccoldo, and thus this marginal could have been written when Cusanus was working on the *Cribratio*.

seu Soret Amram", and in *Cribratio*, I, ch. 1, n. 20, ll. 8–10, h VIII, p. 21: "Orientales vero primam Azoaram aiunt durare usque Soret Amram, quod est quintum capitulum in libro Hispaniarum."

Nicholas returns to this question in the final chapters of his book. In *Cribratio*, III, ch. 17, n. 220–223, h VIII, pp. 174–178, when he calls the Sultan of Baghdad to proclaim the belief in Maria as Mother of God, *theotocon*. The issue of Mary as Aaron's sister finds a clear solution here, not very genial, but rather disappointing and prejudicial: "Considera, si Mahumetus per Iudaeos sibi assistentes deceptus fuit" (*Cribratio*, III, ch. 17, n. 221, ll. 12–13, h VIII, p. 176). Here we can see that Nicholas does not follow Riccoldo in the *Cribratio*. Although he considers him to be a great expert in Arabic, he quotes Ketton's translation. He does not try to examine his source thoroughly, but contents himself with a reliable and comprehensible text. A pre-humanistic *ad fontes*, back to the sources, is not his primary goal. That this could be reproached in a real discourse with Muslim scholars does not seem to bother him; indeed, he does not even appear to realize it. For other topics, for example, Abraham and his belief, Nicholas is more dependent on other writings, for example, on the *Doctrina Mahumeti* (*Cribratio*, III, ch. 12, n. 198–203, h VIII, pp. 158–162).

All in all, the impact of Riccoldo on Nicholas is not as great as one could conclude from the hymn of praise with which Nicholas introduces Riccoldo. Sometimes Nicholas and Riccoldo share similar opinions, although the precise wording differs. Nicholas reads Riccoldo quite closely. When the matter does not seem to be clear, Nicholas drops the item—he is not interested in mere speculation. One prominent example is the moral disqualification of the Qur'an by imputing its proclamations. This idea seems to originate from Riccoldo.[57] Nicholas does not deduce the same idea from the Qur'an and does not treat the subject in the *Cribratio*. In *Cribratio*, II, ch. 19, n. 156, ll. 1–5, h VIII, pp. 126–127, he quotes the Qur'an according to Ketton's translation, but omits the allusion to sodomy. In Vat. lat. 4071, f. 29r, one finds the reasons why Nicholas is reluctant to mention this point in his own work:

> In Riccoldo's book one finds the whole surah about the cow, and that it is said in that way, that they shall not pollute themselves with infidels if they do not believe. In the same way: Your women are your field, plough [them] as you like. But here the translator says: Treat the women that are subjected to you in the way you wish and wherever you want. Brother Riccoldo understands here that sodomy is permitted, but in the same chapter he rejects it

57 Cf. Martínez Gázquez 2016, p. 490.

> when he says that the Sodomites in the time of Loth practised this abominable vice, unknown to former nations.[58]

Thus, Nicholas contents himself with quoting the *Alkoranus latinus* and discussing the problem of polygamy, not sodomy:

> That is also proved by many other things which he permitted regarding women, as, for example, the following in chapter 3: "Treat the women that are subjected to you in the way you wish and wherever you want." And in chapter 8 he permits as many wives as each man is able to dominate, or chastise.[59]

On the one hand, Riccoldo is an important and precious source for Nicholas, whose own knowledge about Islam and the Orient is limited compared with the expertise of Riccoldo. He informs us of his efforts to get more information when he had contact with the Dominicans in Pera during his voyage to Constantinople. On the other hand, using Riccoldo as a source and his lack of knowledge concerning the world of Islam do not force Nicholas simply to follow Riccoldo and to copy his results and conclusions. Even when working on Islam, Nicholas tries to do his best and works through the *Alkoranus latinus*. Where his favourite subjects are concerned, for example, Trinity and Christology, he is completely independent of Riccoldo and writes his lengthy explanations without taking Riccoldo's chapters on these problems into consideration. Both aspects, in some way, resemble John of Segovia. All in all, the whole structure,

58 Cf. the text in Martínez Gázquez 2016, p. 490, whose text has been slightly corrected: "Habetur in libello fratris Ricoldi, hanc omnem azoram de vacca [i.e., sura 2:221 and 223] et quod sic dicatur quod non polluant se cum infidelibus nisi credant. Item mulieres uestre aratura vestra arate ut vultis. hic autem translator dicit (ml scr. et del.) mulieres vobis subiectas penitus pro modo vestro vbicumque volueritis parate. intelligit frater Ricoldus sodomiam hic permittere, sed in eodem capitulo reprehendit cum dicit quod illi sodomite tempore loth operati sunt abhominabile vicium pristinis nacionibus insuetum." Nicholas does not criticize Riccoldo who had already realized that the Qur'an rejects sodomy. The passage in Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, *Contra legem*, ch. 6, ll. 38–43 (ed. Mérigoux 1986, p. 84), reads: "Item in capitulo de vacca concedit sodomiam tam cum masculo quam cum femina. Dicit enim saracenis quod 'non polluant se cum infidelibus nisi credant'; et de mulieribus dicit: 'Mulieres uestre aratura uestra, arate eas ut uultis'. Et tamen in eodem capitulo prius dicit quod illi sodomite tempore Loth operati sunt 'abominabile uicium et pristinis nationibus insuetum.'"

59 Nicolaus de Cusa, *Cribratio* (h VIII), II, ch. 19, n. 156, ll. 2–6, pp. 126–127 (translation according to Jasper Hopkins): "Probant et hoc plura, quae circa mulieres permisit, ut illud capitulo III: 'Mulieres vobis subiectas penitus pro modo vestro, ubicumque vulueritis, parate.' Et capitulo VIII tot permittit uxores, quod quiverit quisque subiugare seu castigare."

substance and direction of the *Cribratio* is completely independent from Riccoldo. It is deeply rooted in Nicholas's own speculative theology, which he developed further with regard to new challenges both from outside, for example, Islam, and from inside. The *Cribratio* is not a simple adaptation of his ideas from *De pace fidei*, written nearly a decade previously. The central idea of presupposition is now extended to a broader methodology with *manuductio* and *pia interpretatio*.[60]

The differences from Riccoldo become manifest from the beginning of the *Cribratio*. In order to prepare a pious interpretation of the Qur'an, Nicholas starts his deliberations by introducing Muhammad as a harmless Christian, who was misled both by his Nestorian and thus heretic teacher Sergius[61] and the Jews. They led him either to misinterpret Jesus Christ and his mother Maria or to make Christians ridiculous, insinuating that they were venerating their bishops and clerics as gods when calling them "domini". As a young, simple-minded and unfortunately misled Christian, Muhammad never thought of contesting or rejecting the belief in God's Trinity (*Cribratio*, Alius prologus, n. 11–15, h VIII, pp. 21–17). These short statements in the second prologue depend heavily on general assumptions about Muhammad in medieval Christian polemics. Nevertheless, they already reflect Nicholas's method in contrast to that of Riccoldo.[62] Of course, Nicholas does not absolve Muhammad in all respects. However, he does not see him "as an adversary of Christ but as a (partly unwitting) vehicle of Christ's self-disclosure to the Arabs".[63] This is the central hermeneutical idea for Nicholas, to which he returns in the third book of *Cribratio*, III, ch. 5, n. 178, h VIII,

60 Cf. Kerger 2009, pp. 107–225.

61 The legend of Sergius or Bahira as Muhammad's teacher mingles various heretic features, which either can be traced back to Arius, who did not accept the divinity of Jesus Christ as being of the same nature (*homoousios*) as the father, or to Nestorius, who questioned the expression mother of God (*theotokos*). The short explanation of Nicholas in *Cribratio* n. 14 refers to Sergius/Nestorius to follow the so-called Nestorian Christological heresy, denying a real union of God and man in Jesus Christ. Nicholas indicates that he follows pseudo-Al-Kindi here, although he could have taken this information from *Contra legem* or indirectly from the compilation he could read in Denis the Carthusian's work. In Codex Cusanus 108, f. 116rb (pseudo-Al-Kindi) he notes in the margin: "Nota historiam veram de ortu Mahmeth", but explains the Nestorian heresy on his own. Cf. *Cribratio* (h VIII), Alius prologus, n. 11, ll. 2–3, p. 13: "Refert nobilis ille Arabs Christianus, de quo supra memini, Sergium monachum ..." Cf. also the *Index fontium*, ibidem, ad locum.

62 Hopkins 1994, p. 77, discusses this passage and stresses the difference from Riccoldo in a similar way.

63 Hopkins 1994, p. 71. However, I would not agree in the following, though tentative statement of Hopkins about Riccoldo (p. 71): "But it *is* remarkable that Nicholas and, in an inchoate way, Ricoldo himself approach the Koran through *pia interpretatio*."

p. 143, and which guides him in his Philippic against the sultan in *Cribratio*, III, ch. 18, n. 224–228, h VIII, pp. 178–181.

It seems strange that Muhammad never seems to have questioned the concept of the Trinity, as we know that normally Christian medieval authors were well aware that Islam rejects Trinitarian faith. Even Nicholas observes that various suras seem to oppose the Christian creed, especially sura 4:171–172, which he himself mentions in *Cribratio*, II, ch. 1, n. 87, ll. 13–18, h VIII, p. 73. Riccoldo names this as the first error in the long and detailed list with which he starts his *Contra legem* (*Contra legem*, ch. 1, ll. 7–13). Yet he does not confront Muhammad's preaching nor the Qur'an with the binary code of truth and error. He does not write against the law of the Saracens, but he searches for the truth in it. Therefore, he strengthens both the idea of *pia interpretatio*, a benevolent or pious interpretation, and that of rationality, *manuductio* and *intellectus* in its very specific, non-scholastic, rather pre-humanist way of thinking.[64] Nicholas's philosophical–theological speculations about the Trinity allow him to reconcile in his Latin translation the explicit and obvious monotheism the Qur'an still preserves with the Trinitarian nature of God. God as *unitas* or *infinitum*, considered in itself, is absolutely one. Even though Nicholas associates different ideas with the Muslim creed, the *shahada*, he is well aware of the clear monotheism it proclaims.[65]

Only in respect to creation and the plurality of beings must God as the origin of all be considered to be Trinitarian.[66] This is necessary from a philosophical perspective and indispensable to avoid contradictions in the Qur'an itself, too. Nicholas points to some verses that are still being discussed to this day, such as "Iesus Mariae filius deique nuntius suusque spiritus et verbum Mariae caelitus missum existit" (sura 4:171; *Cribratio*, II, ch. 11, n. 112, ll. 9–10, h VIII, p. 91). To this scriptural proof from the Qur'an Nicholas adds the classical proof of Scholastic theology taken from the scripture, for example, the New Testament such as Matthew 28:19 (*Cribratio*, II, ch. 11, n. 114, ll. 10–11, h VIII, p. 92). As Nicholas already had stated in his letter to John of Segovia in 1454, it should be easy to convince the Saracens of the Christian belief in the Holy Trinity.[67]

Riccoldo was a member of the Dominican Order and to judge from his writings, some kind of disciple of Ramon Martí. He supported the Dominican conception of

64 Cf. Roth 2000.

65 Cf. esp. Nicolaus de Cusa, *Cribratio* (h VIII), III, ch. 1, n. 159, but also III, ch. 2, n. 165–167, pp. 134–136.

66 Cf. to this subject esp. Resch 2014.

67 Cf. Nicolaus de Cusa, *Epistula ad Iohannem de Segobia*, pp. 97–98, esp. p. 98, ll. 5–8: "Expertus sum tam apud Iudaeos quam ipsos Teucros non esse difficile persuadere trinitatem in unitate substantiae. Sed circa unionem ypostaticam, in qua principaliter ultra unum Deum colentes nostra fides consistit, non minus difficile erit nunc quam semper ab initio."

the relationship of philosophy and theology. He would not have been able to share Nicholas's assumptions about the rationality of the Trinitarian belief and even less his non-Scholastic "demonstrations".[68] Nicholas's belief in and his emphasis on the rationality of the Christian fundamental dogmas helps him to not simply reject the Qur'an and its content. He is not reluctant to find some seeds of truth in this text and does not follow the Dominican scheme of argumentation. The Dominican strategy could be summarized as destruction and replacement, namely first to reject Muhammad's trustworthiness as a prophet, then to demonstrate how erroneous, abominable and contradictory to all human concepts of rationality and morality his prophecies are, finally to prove the reliability of the Christian scriptures in order to conclude with proving the Christian faith on the basis of the scripture. Therefore, Daniel Pachurka correctly categorized a writing he newly ascribed to Riccoldo as "Anti-Muhammad-Werk" in comparison to *Contra legem* as his "Anti-Qur'an-Werk",[69] which would reflect perfectly the preacher's way of thinking. The first point is to reject the anti-Christian objections and arguments of a false faith and then to reconstruct from this *tabula rasa* on the basis of the Holy Scripture, that is divine revelation, the true Christian faith. This method is reflected and recommended in Thomas Aquinas's *Summa contra gentiles* and in his *De rationibus fidei* and in some way, realized by Ramon Martí in his commentary on the Christian creed, the *Explanatio Simboli Christiani*, but also in his opus magnum, *Pugio fidei*.[70]

John follows this method to a certain degree, but not Nicholas. A striking example is the way in which he deals with the denial of the crucifixion in the Qur'an. According to Nicholas, Muhammad did not openly confirm the crucifixion, because he wanted to prevent the Arabs from repudiating the Christian creed. As he could not explain the crucifixion without presupposing the dogma of the human and divine nature of the person of Jesus Christ, therefore he "maybe", as Nicholas says, hid the cruel death of Jesus Christ. Nicholas does not qualify this as false or even heretic, but stresses the possibility for the experts to explain the Christian dogma with the Qur'anic texts.[71]

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68 Cf. Roth 2017, with further literature; Nicholas's concept of belief in comparison with Thomas Aquinas and others is developed in Roth 2000.

69 Cf. Pachurka 2016 in Ricoldus de Monte Crucis, *Tractatus seu disputatio*, p. XXXVIII.

70 Cf. Roth 2017, and esp. Giletti 2015, who with reference to the works of Laureano Robles clearly stresses the indebtedness of the *Pugio fidei* from the *Summa contra gentiles* and the *Summa theologiae*.

71 Cf. Nicolaus de Cusa, *Cribratio* (h VIII), II, ch. 13, n. 124, ll. 3–12, p. 99: "Voluit igitur secundum piam interpretationem occultare ipsis vilem mortem et quod adhuc viveret et venturus esset affirmare. … Dicit tamen hoc taliter, quod sapientes elicere possunt evangelium verissimum esse, ut patebit."

Of course, the Qur'an remains a more than problematic religious law to Nicholas's eyes. There are numerous items where he simply agrees with Riccoldo and follows him. Yet his method, as elaborated in *De pace fidei* and in some *Sermones* from 1453,[72] which consists of demonstrating that Jews and Muslims implicitly believe in Jesus Christ, keeps him from simply rejecting the Qur'an as a whole. This optimism leads him to interpret sura 28:49, "Librum isto meliorem vestrum dictum affirmantem afferte eumque benivole sequar", as if Muhammad wanted his followers to acknowledge the Christian Gospel as the better book.[73] Nicholas is convinced that "the Gospel is the light of the truth of the Qur'an" (*Cribratio*, I, ch. 6, n. 39, l. 1, h VIII, p. 36). He does not even touch the idea of the falsification of Christian scripture, although he could have read about it in *Contra legem* ch. 3. Indeed, he should have realized its basic relevance for all argumentations taken from scripture. In some way, the concept of *pia interpretatio* causes a kind of organizational blindness in Nicholas's work.

The great differences in both method and substance become even more apparent in the way and the extent to which Nicholas relies on Riccoldo. The second book of *Cribratio* as a whole, containing Nicholas's systematic Trinitarian and Christological discourse, is written without any reference to Riccoldo although Nicholas estimates him highly and ranks him over all the other writings on Islam to which he had access. For Nicholas, Riccoldo is not an authority on these important dogmatic and systematic tenets and their communication. While he warmly recommends Riccoldo and borrows information from him, at the same time he bypasses his methodical principles and unfolds his own theological conclusions not only in a completely independent way, but even in contrast or even opposition to Dominican theology.

CONCLUSION

John and Nicholas come from quite different theological and ecclesiastical backgrounds, but have a similar experience in dealing with religious opponents that might have astonished Riccoldo. John is heavily indebted to his remarkable encounter and discussion with Muslims in 1431 where he was able to successfully combat their theological prejudices. Nicholas talks about a similar encounter with Jews and Turks

72 Cf. esp. Nicolaus de Cusa, *Sermo* 126, n. 7 (1453), ed. Donati 2007, pp. 22–23, ll. 1–50.

73 Cf. sura 28:49, and Nicolaus de Cusa, *Cribratio* (h VIII), I, ch. 4, n. 34, ll. 8–13, p. 33, with Nicholas's comment: "'Librum isto meliorem vestrum dictum affirmantem afferte eumque benivole sequar.' Ecce quomodo non vult affirmare Alkoranum evangelio praeferendum. Non sunt igitur ea, quae in Alkorano continentur, ut dei verba acceptanda, quando prioribus a deo traditis et per Alkoranum admissis libris adversantur."

whom he could convince of the rationality of the Christian belief in the Trinity.[74] They had witnessed the encounters of the Council of Basel with the Hussites and the fierce debates that finally led to a more or less viable agreement in the Prague *Compactata*. This was an outstanding example for both theologians of how one could try to deal with the Muslims *via pacis et doctrinae* or *via concilii*. In Basel, with the Prague *Compactata* as a result, the Western Church had—maybe for the first time—successfully negotiated with an enemy who was clearly thought to be heretical and whose obstinacy and unwillingness to abjure his errors could not be overcome by force. Riccoldo's personal experiences were far more negative, as can be seen in his *Epistulae ad Ecclesiam Triumphantem*. John and Nicholas focus on the positive results or, in a kind of basic optimism, neglect the negative aspects in the further development as the peace with the Hussites was quite fragile and threatened from both sides.

Besides this more general transcultural, historical and personal background, one should also take into account another factor with great impact in the 15th century. As Riccoldo was not a secular priest, but a member of the religious order of the Dominican friars, one should compare the methods of John and Nicholas with that of the great mendicant orders.[75] The theology of John of Segovia has many concepts and principles in common with Franciscan theology. However, these common features do not lead him to follow the previous methodology of mission already present in the first monastic rule of the Franciscan Order. They could be summarized under the general idea of humility, either by living as a Christian in simplicity and submission among the infidels or by openly confessing and preaching the Christian faith in the Trinity and the salvation in Jesus Christ.[76] On the contrary, John criticizes this (to his eyes) naïve way of preaching Christian truth or more precisely of causing disconcertment. According to him, it is completely useless or even counterproductive to confront those with the content of Christian faith who, because of prejudice and lack of knowledge, cannot help but misunderstand or repudiate both believers and belief. The effects up to his time had been meagre, modest or even nil. Not even martyrdom was granted to most of those awkward Christian missionaries, as John states with direct reference to Saint Francis.[77] Neither John nor Nicholas share the Franciscan concept of mission.

The same holds true for the Dominican methodology. Of course, both protagonists of the 15th century agree with the Dominican mendicants' emphasis on erudition

74 Cf. Nicolaus de Cusa, *Epistula ad Iohannem de Segobia*, p. 98, ll. 4–5: "Expertus sum tam apud Iudaeos quam ipsos Teucros non esse difficile persuadere trinitatem in unitate substantiae."

75 For a short comparison of their missionary strategies cf. Tolan 2002, pp. 214–255.

76 Cf. Müller 2002, pp. 115–134, with reference to *Regula non bullata*, ch. 16.

77 Cf. Johannes de Segobia, *De gladio*, Consid. 5, ll. 76–99, and Consid. 34, ll. 99–171. John even deliberates ibidem how the devil himself obstructs any positive effect.

and scholarship in theology and languages as necessary elements for those chosen to preach among the infidels. But both circumvent the theoretical dissociation of faith and reason that is prominent in Dominican theology and more or less canonical in Dominican schools after Thomas Aquinas. Yet, their concrete alternatives are quite different. John rejects Riccoldo directly and methodically, but follows some main conclusions and results concerning Muhammad, the Qur'an and the practical rules for interreligious debates. Though there is some valuable content in the Qur'an, all in all it is the product not of a misled, albeit honest Muhammad, but the hideous product of the devil himself. This is no well-meaning interpretation; instead a clear dismantlement is needed. But this should not be the first step in respect to the Muslims, who could not help being offended by such an attempt, but rather eliminating prejudices and misunderstandings. Here it is reason that can provide the general and common fundament, which will help to disclose the Christian truth, not scripture alone as Dominicans think. Ultimately, John rejects Riccoldo's general method, but shares his judgement of the Qur'an and Muhammad as being instruments of the devil. Nicholas, on the contrary, integrates the Qur'an as a basis into the interreligious debates about the main tenets of Christian faith. Moreover, he defends Muhammad as the author of the Qur'an. In some way, he extends his quite-as-much-ingenious-as-naïve *pia interpretatio* from the field of Muslim sources to that of Christian apologetics. He praises Riccoldo although this method is not compatible with his own. He selects the material according to his own needs and overlooks all points that would thwart or counteract his own concept of the rationality of the Christian faith.

In this respect, John and Nicholas are on common ground, which they both expressed in their correspondence in the year 1454. That they made opposing conclusions regarding Riccoldo is of less importance than the point at which their relationships to Riccoldo cross. The crossing point of the chiasmus in their relationships to Riccoldo is theoretically the new concept of faith and reason, practically the openness to discussion and debate with religious adversaries, not merely to prove the falseness and heresy of their statements, but to convince them of the rationality of one's own position, namely the Christian faith. This new starting point, however, was not able to gain a foothold during the lifetimes of John and Nicholas, nor in the following centuries, but it could be fruitful in our own time. This will require and presuppose, above all, an openness and willingness to trust in rational argumentation in one's own religion on all sides and enough self-confidence to know that accepting the other as a dialogue partner will entail questioning the truth of one's own belief.

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"Tam falsorum christianorum quam falsigraphorum sarracenorum crimina"

Christian Reform and the Contra legem Sarracenorum *in the Early Modern Period**

In the *Epistola drizata per un servo de Dio alla setta delli Agareni*, a short book printed in Venice *c.* 1534, its then-anonymous Christian author, under the initials "P.A.", presented a letter to Sultan Suleiman encouraging him to convert. In the prologue to this letter, the anonymous writer explained the circumstances that led him to pen the letter to the Ottoman ruler. He writes that his commitment was the result of a series of ecstatic experiences he had after seeing, in August 1525, "some Turks speaking their language" in Venice. As a result of this, after coming back to his senses:

> by grace of He my God I learned that my tormented mind had been taken back to this world, and in it, I yet felt the growing incorruptible rational desire to see both the Christian clergy together with the people reformed, as well as the whole sect of Muhammad converted perfectly to the true faith of my lord Jesus Christ, which thing cannot be anymore ... without the immense foretold punishments.[1]

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1 Paolo Angelo, *Epistola drizata per un servo de Dio alla setta delli Agareni ditti Saraceni, annontiandoli el gran mysterio che lo omnipotente Dio Iesu Christo vero Signore tene a punir le iniquita de falsi christiani per reformare, & cõfortare li boni a far bene, & patir male, & per conterire prestamente, & convertire le Mahumetice genti alla sua fede orthodoxa Santissima c.* 1534),