

**NICHOLAS OF CUSA'S DE PACE  
FIDEI AND CRIBRATIO ALKORANI:  
TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS  
(*Second Edition*)**

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## ON PEACEFUL UNITY OF FAITH<sup>1</sup> (*De Pace Fidei*)

### I

- 1 There was a certain man who, having formerly seen the sites in the regions of Constantinople, was inflamed with zeal for God as a result of those deeds that were reported to have been perpetrated at Constantinople most recently and most cruelly by the King of the Turks.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, with many groanings he beseeched the Creator of all, because of His kindness, to restrain the persecution that was raging more fiercely than usual on account of the difference of rite between the [two] religions. It came to pass that after a number of days—perhaps because of his prolonged, incessant meditation—a vision was shown to this same zealous man. Therefrom he educed the following: the few wise men who are rich in the experiential knowledge of all such differences as are observed throughout the world in the [different] religions can find a single, readily-available harmony; and through this harmony there can be constituted, by a suitable and true means, perpetual peace within [the domain of] religion. Hence, in order that this vision might one day become known to those who have a say in these especially important matters, he wrote down plainly, in what follows, as much of it as he recalled.
- 2 For he had been caught up to an intellectual height where, as it were, in the presence of those who have departed from life a hearing on this matter—[a hearing] in the council of the loftiest beings and under the presiding direction of the Almighty—was being held along the following lines: The King of heaven and earth said that from the kingdom of this world sorrowing messengers had conveyed to Him the moanings of the oppressed, that for the sake of religion very many [men] were in armed conflict with one another, and that by physical force men were either compelling [their fellow-men] to renounce their long-adhered-to religious sect or were inflicting [upon their fellow-men] death. From the whole earth there were very many message-bearers of the laments; and the King commanded them to present their accounts amid the full assembly of the saints. All these message-bearers seemed to be known to the heavenly inhabitants, for [these messengers] had been established by the King of the universe, from the beginning, over each of the mundane provinces and over each of the religious sects. For, in form, they did not appear to be men but

to be intellectual powers.

- 3 One leader, on behalf of all such messengers, uttered the following opinion: “O Lord, King of the universe, what does any creature have that You did not give to it?<sup>3</sup> It was fitting that the human body, formed from the clay of the earth, was inbreathed by You with a rational spirit, so that from within this body an image of Your ineffable power would shine forth. From one [man] there was multiplied the great number of people who inhabit the surface of dry land. That intellectual spirit, planted on earth and absorbed within a shadow,<sup>4</sup> does not see the light and the first stages of its origin. Nevertheless, You created with it all those things through which it (when stimulated by an appreciative desire for the things it attains unto through the senses) can at some time raise the eyes of its mind unto You, the Creator of all, and can be reunited with You in supreme love; and in this way, at long last, it can return in fruition to its origin.
- 4 “But You know, O Lord, that there cannot be a great multitude without much diversity and that almost all [men] are compelled to live a hard life full of troubles and miseries and to be underlings, in abject subjection, to kings who wield dominion. Consequently, it has come about that of all [men] few have so much leisure that by using their freedom of choice they are able to arrive at a knowledge of themselves.<sup>5</sup> For they are distracted by many corporeal cares and tasks; and so, they are unable to seek after You, who are a hidden God.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, You set over Your people different kings and different seers, called prophets—very many of whom, in their role as Your legates, instituted (in Your name) worship and laws and instructed an uneducated people. [Men] accepted these laws just as if You Yourself, the King of kings, had spoken to them face to face; they believed that they heard not kings and prophets but You Yourself in and through kings and prophets. Now, to various nations You sent various prophets and teachers—some at one time, others at another. But the earthly human condition has this characteristic: viz., that longstanding custom, which is regarded as having passed over into nature, is defended as the truth. In this way there arise great quarrels when each community prefers its own faith to another [faith].
- 5 “Aid [us], then, O You who alone are able to. For this strife occurs for the sake of You, whom alone all [men] worship in everything they are seen to adore. For no one, in whatever he is seen to desire, desires [anything] except the good, which You are. And in all intellectual inference no one seeks anything other than the truth, which You

are. What does that which is alive seek except to continue living? What does that which exists seek except to continue existing? You, then, who are the giver of life and of existence, are the one who is seen to be sought in different ways in different rites, and You are named in different names; for as You are [in Yourself] You remain unknown and ineffable to all. For You who are infinite power are not any of the things You created;<sup>7</sup> nor can the creature comprehend the concept of Your infinity, since there is no comparative relation of the finite to the Infinite.<sup>8</sup> But You, O Omnipotent God, who are invisible to every mind, are able to manifest Yourself as visible to whom You will—[manifest Yourself] in the manner in which You can be apprehended.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, do not hide Yourself any longer, O Lord. Be propitious, and manifest Your face; and all peoples will be saved, who no longer will be able to desert the Source of life and its sweetness, once having foretasted even a little thereof. For no one departs from You except because He is ignorant of You.

- 6 “If You will deign to do the foregoing,<sup>10</sup> the sword will cease, as will also the malice of hatred and all evils; and all [men] will know that there is only one religion in a variety of rites.<sup>11</sup> But perchance this difference of rites cannot be eliminated; or perhaps it is not expedient [that it be eliminated], in order that the diversity may make for an increase of devotion, since each region will devote more careful attention to making its ceremonies more ‘favorable,’ as it were, to You, the King.<sup>12</sup> If so, then at least let there be one religion—just as You are one—and one true worship of You as Sovereign.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, be placable, O Lord, because Your wrath is Your graciousness and Your justice is Your mercy. Spare Your weak creatures. We Your envoys, whom You have granted to Your people as guardians and whom You behold here in Your presence, suppliantly pray Your majesty herefor with every manner of prayer possible to us.”

## II

- 7 After all the heavenly citizens alike bowed to the Supreme King, who was seated on the throne,<sup>14</sup> He said in response to the supplication of the archangel that man was left to his own choice and that He had created man capable, through his choice, of fellowship with Himself. But man, who is animal and earthly, is kept in ignorance under the dominion of the Prince of darkness;<sup>15</sup> and he walks in accordance with the conditions of the sensible life (which life comes only from the world of the Prince of darkness) and not in accordance with the in-

tellectual, inner man (whose life comes from the region of man's origin). [The King] said that for this reason He had called upon wayward man to return—[calling] with much care and diligence through various prophets who (in contrast with others) were seers. At length, after not even all these prophets were sufficiently able to overcome the Prince of ignorance, He sent His own Word, through whom He made even the aeons.<sup>16</sup> The Word assumed a humanity in order that in this way, at least, He might enlighten man (who was teachable because of his most free choice) and [man] would see (in case he ever hoped to return to the sweetness of eternal life) that he must walk not in accordance with the outer man but in accordance with the inner man.<sup>17</sup> And because His Word assumed a mortal human nature, [the Word] bore witness by His own blood to the truth that man is capable of [attaining] eternal life (in order to attain eternal life the animal and sensible life must be considered as nothing) and that the inner man's ultimate desire is only for eternal life, i.e., [only] for the truth, which is the only thing desired [by the inner man] and which, as being eternal, eternally nourishes the intellect. This truth which nourishes the intellect is nothing but the Word Himself, in whom are enfolded all things and through whom all things are unfolded. The Word assumed a human nature in order that no man would doubt that in accordance with the election of free choice he can obtain—in his own human nature, through that man who is also the Word—the immortal food of truth. And [the King] added: "Since [all of] these things have been done, what else is there that could have been done and was not?"

### III

- 8 To the foregoing question by the King of kings, the Word that was made flesh and that held the preeminent position<sup>18</sup> among all the heavenly inhabitants, answered on behalf of all: "Father of Mercies, Your works are most perfect, and there remains nothing to be added for their completion. Nevertheless, because You decreed from the beginning that man remain in possession of free choice, and since in the sensible world nothing remains stable, and since fluxible opinions and conjectures are changed from time to time, as are also tongues and interpretations, human nature needs frequent visitation<sup>19</sup> in order that the false inferences which occur very often concerning Your Word may be eradicated and thereby truth may continually shine forth. Since truth is one and since it cannot fail to be grasped by every free intellect, all the diverse religions will be led unto one orthodox faith."

9 [This answer] was pleasing to the King. And upon summoning the angels who were in charge of all the nations and tongues, he commanded each [of them] to bring to the Word-made-flesh one very experientially knowledgeable [man]. And straightway there appeared in the presence of the Word the most judicious men of this world—as if caught up unto ecstasy. To them the Word of God spoke as follows: “The Lord, King of heaven and of earth, has heard the moaning of those who have been killed, those who have been imprisoned, and those who have been reduced unto servitude—[the moaning of those] who suffer on account of the diversity of the religions. All who either inflict or suffer this persecution are motivated only from their belief that such [action or passion] is expedient for salvation and is pleasing to their Creator. Therefore, the Lord has had mercy upon His people and is agreeable that henceforth all the diverse religions be harmoniously reduced, by the common consent of all men, unto one inviolable [religion]. To you select men He entrusts the burdensome responsibility of [this] commission, giving you from His own court assisting and ministering angelic spirits who will watch over you and guide you. And He designates Jerusalem<sup>20</sup> as the most fitting place for this [work].”

## IV

10 To the foregoing [words] a man who was older than the others and who was, as it appeared, a Greek, replied after expressing adoration: “We praise our God, whose mercy [is bestowed] upon all His works, who alone is able to cause such great diversity of religions to be brought into one harmonious peace, and whose bidding we His creation cannot fail to obey. But we ask to be now instructed as to how this oneness of religion can be instituted by us. For [each nation] will have difficulty accepting, through our persuading, a faith that is other than that [respective] faith which each nation has hitherto defended even with its blood.”

The Word responded: “You will [all] find to be everywhere presupposed not a faith that is *other* but a faith that is one and the same. For among the countrymen of your own language-groups, you who are now present are called wise—or, at least, [are called] philosophers, or lovers of wisdom.”

“So it is,” said the Greek.

“If, then, you all love wisdom, don’t you presuppose that wisdom exists?”

They all proclaimed at one time that no one doubted that wisdom existed.

- 11** The Word added: “There can be only one Wisdom. For if it were possible for there to be more than one Wisdom, these wisdoms would have to derive from a single [Wisdom]; for oneness is prior to all plurality.”

*Greek:* None of us doubt that there is one Wisdom, which we all love and on account of which we are called philosophers. By participation in it many men are wise, though Wisdom itself remains, in itself, simple and undivided.

*Word:* You all agree, then, that there is one most simple Wisdom,<sup>21</sup> whose power is ineffable. And in the unfolding of Wisdom’s power, each [of you] experiences this ineffable and infinite power. For example, when sight is directed toward visible objects, and when it takes cognizance of the fact that whatever-it-sees was produced by the power of Wisdom (and similarly regarding hearing and each thing unto which the sense [of hearing] attains), it affirms that invisible Wisdom exceeds all things.

- 12** *Greek:* We who have taken up this profession of philosophy love the foretasted sweetness of Wisdom through no other means than through an appreciative desiring of the things that are subject to the senses.<sup>22</sup> For who would not die in order to obtain such Wisdom, from which emanates all beauty, all sweetness of life, and everything desirable? How great is the power of Wisdom that shines forth in the creation of man!—in his members, in the ordering of the members, in the infused life, the harmony of the organs, the movement, and, finally, in the rational spirit. This spirit is capable of marvelous arts and is, as it were, Wisdom’s imprint; in this spirit, more than in anything else, eternal Wisdom shines forth as in a close image [of itself]—just as an original [shines forth] in its close likeness. And what is most marvelous of all: this reflection of Wisdom approaches, by means of the effortful turning of the [rational] spirit, closer and closer unto the original—until the point that the living reflection, [which shines forth] from out of a shadowy image,<sup>23</sup> becomes ever more true to, and ever more conformed to, true Wisdom. Nonetheless, Absolute Wisdom, as it is [in itself], is never attainable in something other [than itself]. Consequently, eternal, inexhaustible Wisdom is, in this way, perpetual and unfailing intellectual food.<sup>24</sup>

*Word:* You rightly come to the topic at which we are aiming. Accordingly, all of you, although you are said to be of different religions,



presuppose, in all such diversity, one thing that you call Wisdom. But, tell me, does a single Wisdom encompass whatever can be spoken of?

## V

- 13** The Italian replied: “Indeed, the Word is not present outside of Wisdom. For the Word of the Supremely Wise is present in Wisdom, and Wisdom [is present] in the Word; and not anything [is present] outside of Wisdom. For Infinite Wisdom encompasses all things.”

*Word:* Then if someone were to say that all things were created in Wisdom and someone else [were to say] that all things were created in the Word, would they be saying the same thing or something different?

*Italian:* Although a difference appears in the verbal expressions, they are the same in meaning. For the Creator’s Word, in which He created all things, cannot be [anything] except His Wisdom.

- 14** *Word:* What, then, seems to you to be the case? Is that Wisdom God or a creature?

*Italian:* Because God the Creator creates all things in Wisdom, He is, necessarily, the Wisdom of created wisdom. For prior to every creature there is Wisdom, through which every created thing is what it is.

*Word:* Thus, Wisdom is eternal, because it is prior to everything originated and created.

*Italian:* No one can deny that that which is understood to be prior to everything originated is eternal.

*Word:* Therefore, it is the Beginning.

*Italian:* Yes, it is.

*Word:* Therefore, it is most simple. For everything composite is originated; for its composing parts cannot exist later than the composite itself.

*Italian:* Granted.

*Word:* So Wisdom is eternity.

- 15** *Italian:* The case cannot be otherwise.

*Word:* Now, it is not possible that there be more than one eternity, because prior to all plurality there is oneness.<sup>25</sup>

*Italian:* No one denies this, either.

*Word:* Therefore, Wisdom is the one, simple, eternal God, the Beginning of all things.

*Italian:* [This] is necessarily so.

*Word:* See how you philosophers of various sects agree on the

religion of one God—whom you all presuppose, in that you profess to be lovers of Wisdom.

## VI

- 16** At this point an Arab spoke up: “Nothing can be said more clearly or more truly.”

*Word:* Just as by virtue of your being lovers of Wisdom you declare that there is Absolute Wisdom, do you think that there are men of sound understanding who do not love Wisdom?

*Arab:* I think it altogether true that all men by nature desire Wisdom. For Wisdom is the life of the intellect, which cannot be sustained in its own vitality by any other food than by truth and by the Word of life (i.e., by the intellect’s intellectual bread, viz., Wisdom). For just as every existing thing desires whatever it cannot exist without, so the intellectual life [desires] Wisdom.

*Word:* Therefore, all men declare together with you that there is one Absolute Wisdom, which they presuppose and which is the one God.

*Arab:* So it is. And no one who has understanding can affirm anything different.

*Word:* Therefore, for all those who are of sound understanding there is one religion and worship, which is presupposed in all the diversity of the rites.

- 17** *Arab:* You [Yourself] are Wisdom, because [You are] the Word of God.

How is it, I ask, that the worshippers of more than one god are in agreement with the philosophers [with regard to belief] in one God? For never at any time are the philosophers found to have believed otherwise than the following: viz., that it is impossible that there be a plurality of gods over whom there is not pre-eminent a single super-exalted God who alone is the Beginning from which the others have whatever they have ([having it] in a way that is much more excellent than [the way in which] oneness is present in number<sup>26</sup>).

*Word:* All who have ever worshiped a plurality of gods have presupposed there to be deity. For in all the gods, they adore the deity as [one and] the same in [all] its participants.<sup>27</sup> For just as there are no white things if whiteness does not exist, so if the deity does not exist, there are no gods. Therefore, the worshiping of [a plurality of] gods bespeaks the deity; and he who says that there is more than one god says [implicitly] that there is, antecedently, one Beginning of them

all—just as he who maintains that there is more than one holy [man] admits that there is one Most Holy, by participation in whom all [these] others are holy. For no race was ever so obtuse that it believed there to be a plurality of gods each of whom was the universe's First Cause, Beginning, or Creator.

*Arab:* I agree. For he [who says] that there is a plurality of First Beginnings contradicts himself. For since the Beginning cannot be originated (because it would be originated from itself and would exist before it existed—something which reason does not accept), the Beginning is eternal. Moreover, it is not possible that there be a plurality of eternal things, because oneness is prior to all plurality. Thus, necessarily, there will be [only] one Beginning, and Cause, of the universe.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, I have not yet found that any race has deviated from the way of truth with regard to this [teaching].

**18** *Word:* Therefore, if all those who worship a plurality of gods look unto that which they presuppose, viz., unto the deity, which is the cause of all [the gods], and if, as reason dictates, they accept this deity into their overt religious practices (even as, implicitly, they worship it in all whom they call gods), then the dispute is dissolved.

*Arab:* Perhaps this [dissolution] might not be difficult [to effect]. But it will be hard to eliminate the worshipping of gods. For the people hold it to be certain that help is afforded to them from [such] worshipping; and, consequently, they are inclined to these gods for the sake of their own salvation.

*Word:* If the people were informed about salvation—[informed] in a manner comparable to the aforesaid one—then they would rather seek salvation in Him who has given being and who is Saviour and Infinite Salvation than [seek it] in those who of themselves have nothing unless it is conceded [to them] by the Saviour. But [take a case] where the people flee for refuge unto gods who in everyone's opinion are holy because they have lived in a Godlike manner. [Suppose the people are fleeing] as if to an esteemed intercessor vis-à-vis a certain infirmity or other distress. Or [suppose] they either adore this intercessor by means of a veneration that is appropriate to holy creatures<sup>29</sup> or reverently honor his memory because he is a friend of God<sup>30</sup> and his life is to be imitated. Provided they were to give to the one, unique God complete and true worship as Sovereign, there would be no contradiction of the one religion; and, in this manner, they would be easily calmed [if the foregoing were explained to them].

## VII

- 19** At this point a man from India [asked]: “What about statues and effigies?”

*Word:* Images that lead to a knowledge of the things which are admissible in the true worship of the one God are not condemned. But when they lead away from the true worshipping of the one God as Sovereign (as if in stones there were some portion of deity and as if [the deity] were bound to a statue), then, rightly, the images ought to be broken, because they deceive [men] and turn [them] away from the truth.

*Indian:* Because of the oracular responses that are given, it is difficult to turn a people away from long-standing idolatry.

*Word:* Rarely are these oracular responses formulated otherwise than by priests who report that the god responded in such and such a way. For to the proposed question they devise a response either by means of some scheme that they introduced into observance regarding the disposition of the heavens or by means of a lot. This [response] they ascribe to the god, as if the heavens or Apollo or the sun commanded [them] to respond in this way. Accordingly, it happens that most of the time these [responses] are either ambiguous (lest [the priests] be openly convicted of a lie) or completely false; and if ever [they are] true, [they are] true by accident. And when the priest is a good conjecturer, he divines better and the responses are truer.

- 20** *Indian:* It has been ascertained that frequently a spirit that is bound to a statue gives responses openly.

*Word:* [Such a spirit is] not the soul of a man or of Apollo or of Asclepius<sup>31</sup> or of another who is worshiped as a god but is, rather, an evil spirit—hostile, from the beginning, to human salvation. In order to deceive in this way, [it] pretended that through [some man’s] faith it had been bound up by him—sometimes, but rarely, to a statue—and was compelled to [give] these responses; but after the deceitfulness was exposed, [the spirit] ceased [its activity]. Consequently, nowadays, [these statues] have mouths but do not speak.<sup>32</sup> After this deceitfulness of the Seducer<sup>33</sup> was discovered by experience in many regions, idolatry was condemned almost everywhere by the wisest<sup>34</sup> men. And likewise in the East it will not be difficult for the deceitfulness of idolatry to be exposed, to the end of invoking the one God. Thus, in this way, these [peoples] will be brought into conformity with the other nations of the world.

*Indian:* Because [these] flagrant deceits have been exposed and because on account of them the very prudent Romans and likewise the Greeks and the Arabs have broken their idols, it is to be fully hoped that the idolatrous Indians will do similarly—especially since they are wise and do not doubt that there is religious necessity for the worship of one God. Even if together with this [true worship] they, in their own way, worship idols, nonetheless because they adore these [idols] as having to do with the one God, they will thus reach a peaceful conclusion.

But with regard to a *trine* God, it will be very difficult for a harmony to be accepted everywhere. For it will seem to all that a trinity cannot be conceived apart from three. Now, if in the deity there is a trinity, then there will also be a plurality in the deity. But previously it was stated—and, indeed, it must be the case—that there is only one absolute deity. Therefore, the plurality is not present in the absolute deity but in the participants, who are not God absolutely but are gods by participation.

- 21 *Word:* As Creator, God is trine and one; as Infinite, He is neither trine nor one nor any of those things that can be spoken of.<sup>35</sup> For the names that are ascribed to God are taken from creatures, since in Himself God is ineffable and beyond all that can be named or spoken of. Hence it is that those who worship God are to adore Him as the Beginning of the universe.<sup>36</sup> But in the one universe there is found to be a multitude of parts, as well as an inequality and a separation of parts. (For a multitude of stars, trees, men, and stones is evident to the senses.) Now, oneness is the beginning of all multitude. So, then, Eternal Oneness is the [Absolute] Beginning of multitude [in the universe. Moreover,] in the one universe there is found to be an inequality of parts, because no [part] is [exactly] similar to another.<sup>37</sup> Now, inequality descends from equality of oneness. Therefore, Eternal Equality [of Oneness] is prior to all inequality.<sup>38</sup> [Furthermore,] in the one universe there is found to be a distinction, or a separation, of parts. Now, prior to all distinction is the union of oneness and of equality [of oneness]. But separation, or distinction, descends from this union. Therefore, Union is eternal. Now, there cannot be a plurality of eternal things. Therefore, in a singular eternity there is found Oneness, Equality of Oneness, and the Union (*unio seu connexio*) of Oneness and of Equality [of Oneness]. Thus, the most simple Beginning of the universe is triune. [Moreover,] because that which is originated is supposed to be enfolded in the Beginning, and because whatever is orig-

inated attests, likewise, that it is enfolded in its Beginning, then some such trine distinction<sup>39</sup> is also found—in a oneness of essence—in every originated thing. Herefrom<sup>40</sup> the most simple Beginning of all things will also be [inferable to be] trine and one.<sup>41</sup>

## VIII

22 *Chaldean*: Even if the wise can to some extent grasp these [points], they exceed [the grasp of] the common folk. For, as I understand [the matter], it is true not that there are three gods but, rather, that there is one [God], who is triune. Do you mean that the one [God] is three in power?

*Word*: God is the Absolute Power of all powers, for He is omnipotent. Hence, since there is only one Absolute Power, viz., the Divine Being, then to call that Power trine is not other than to call God trine. But do not construe *power* in such way that it is distinguished from actuality (*realitas*); for in God power is actuality (*realitas*)—and similarly regarding Absolute Potency, which is also [Absolute] Power. For to no one does it seem absurd for it to be said that Divine Omnipotence (which is God) has within itself Oneness (which is Being), Equality, and Union<sup>42</sup>—so that in this way [the following holds true]: (1) The power of Oneness unifies, or gives being to, all the things that have being. (For a thing exists insofar as it is one, and *one* is convertible with *being*.) (2) The power of Equality makes equal, or bestows form on, all the things that exist. (For in that a thing is neither more nor less than what it is, it exists equally, for if it were something more or something less, it would not exist; so it cannot exist without equality.) (3) Similarly, the power of Union unifies, or unites.

Hence, by means of the power of Oneness, Omnipotence summons [a given thing] from out of not-being,<sup>43</sup> so that that which did not exist is made capable of existing. And by means of the power of Equality, [Omnipotence] bestows form. And by means of the power of Union, [Omnipotence] unites—even as in the essence of love you see how it is that loving unites the lover to the one who is lovable.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, when a man is summoned by Omnipotence from out of not-being, there first of all arises a oneness, then an equality, and then the union of both. For unless something is one it cannot exist; therefore, first of all there is one. And because the man is summoned from out of not-being, the oneness of the man arises first of all, then the equality of that oneness (or of that being); and then from the oneness and the equality proceeds love, or union. (Equality is the unfolding of form

in oneness; because of this [equality] there was summoned forth the oneness of a man and not the oneness of a lion or of some other thing; but equality can arise only from oneness, for otherness does not produce equality, but, rather, oneness, or identity, does.) For oneness is not separable from equality, nor equality from oneness. Therefore, union, or love, exists in such way that when oneness is posited, then equality is posited, and when oneness and equality are posited, then love, or union, is posited.

23 Therefore, if [as in the case of the Trinity] there is found no equality that is not Equality of Oneness, and if there is found no union that is not Union of Oneness and of Equality (so that Union is present in both Oneness and Equality, Equality is present in Oneness and Oneness is present in Equality, and both Oneness and Equality are present in Union), then it is evident that in the Trinity there is no essential distinction. For things that differ essentially exist in such way that one [of them] can exist when the other does not. But the Trinity exists in such way that if Oneness is posited, Equality of Oneness is posited (and conversely), and if Oneness and Equality [of Oneness] are posited, then Union is posited (and conversely). Therefore, we see that the Oneness, the Equality, and the Union differ from one another not in essence but [only] in their relationships. By contrast, a numerical distinction is an essential [distinction]. For the number two differs from the number three essentially; for if two is posited, it is not the case that three is [also] posited; and three does not follow upon the existence of two. Hence, the trinity in God is not composite or plural or numerical<sup>45</sup> but is most simple oneness. Therefore, those who believe that God is one, will not deny that He is trine, when they understand that that trinity is not [essentially] distinct from the most simple oneness but is most simple oneness in such way that unless the trinity were present in the oneness the Omnipotent Beginning would not exist in order to create the universe and each thing [in it].

The more one a power is, the stronger it is;<sup>46</sup> and the more one it is, the simpler it is. Therefore, the more powerful, or the stronger, it is, the simpler it is. Hence, since the Divine Being is omnipotent, it is most simple and trine. For without the trinity there would not be the most simple, most strong, and omnipotent Beginning.

*Chaldean:* I think that no one can disagree with this interpretation. But the view that God has a Son and that He partakes of the deity—this the Arabs (and many [others] along with them) call into question.

24 *Word:* Some [writers] name Oneness *Father*, Equality *Son*, and

Union *Holy Spirit* because these terms, though not proper, nonetheless signify the Trinity suitably. For the Son is from the Father; and Love, or Spirit, is from Oneness and from the Son's Equality. For the nature of the Father passes over into a certain equality in the Son; therefore, Love-and-Union arises from Oneness and Equality. And if simpler terms could be found, they would be more fitting—as are Oneness, Itness, and Sameness.<sup>47</sup> For these terms seem to explicate better the most fecund simplicity of the essence. And since in the essence of the rational soul there is a certain fecundity—viz., mind, wisdom, and love, or will—notice that mind, of itself, begets understanding or wisdom, from which [proceeds] will, or love. And this trinity in the soul's oneness of essence is a fecundity which [the soul] has in likeness to the most fecund uncreated Trinity. Similarly, every created thing bears an image of the Creative Power and in its own manner has fecundity in close or distant likeness to the most fecund Trinity that is the Creator of all things. Consequently, the creature has not only being from the Divine Being but also, in its own manner, fecund trine being from the most fecund triune Being. Without this fecund being the world could not exist and creatures would not exist in the best way in which they could exist.

## IX

- 25 To these [statements] a Jew responded: “The Super-blessed Trinity, which cannot be denied, has been explained very well. For a certain prophet, disclosing the Trinity to us very briefly, said that God had asked how He Himself who bestowed on others the fecundity of begetting was able to be sterile.<sup>48</sup> And although Jews shun the [doctrine of] the Trinity because they have considered the Trinity to be a plurality, nonetheless once it is understood that [the Trinity] is most simple fecundity, [the Jews] will very gladly give assent.”
- 26 *Word:* The Arabs, too, and all the wise will easily understand from the foregoing [considerations] (1) that to deny the Trinity is to deny the divine fecundity and creative power and (2) that to confess the Trinity is to deny a plurality, and an association, of gods. For the [divine] fecundity, which is also trinity, does not make it necessary that there be a plurality of gods who work together to create all things; for one infinite fecundity suffices to create everything that is creatable. The Arabs will be much better able to grasp the truth [of the Trinity] in this manner than in the manner in which they speak of God as having an essence and a soul—adding that God has a word and a spir-



it.<sup>49</sup> For if it is said that God has a soul, then that soul cannot be understood to be [anything] except Reason-that-is-God (or Word-that-is-God; for reason is nothing other than word). And what, then, is God's Holy Spirit except Love-that-is-God? For whatever is predicated truly of the most simple God is God Himself. If it is true that God has a Word, then it is true that the Word is God. If it is true that God has a Spirit, then it is true that the Spirit is God. For *having* does not properly befit God, because He *is* all things, so that in Him having is being. Hence, the Arab does not deny that God is Mind, and that the Word, or Wisdom, is begotten from Mind, and that from Mind and the Word there proceeds the Spirit, or Love. And this is that Trinity which was explained above and which is posited by the Arabs,<sup>50</sup> although most of them are not aware of the fact that they confess a trinity. Similarly, even in your prophets you Jews find lit written I that the heavens were formed by the Word of God and by His Spirit.<sup>51</sup>

Now, in the manner in which Arabs and Jews deny the Trinity, assuredly it ought to be denied by all. But in the manner in which the truth of the Trinity is explained above, of necessity it will be embraced by all.

## X

- 27 To these [remarks] a Sythian [said]: "There can be no difficulty in adoring the most simple Trinity, which even nowadays all who worship gods adore. For the wise say that God as Creator is of both sexes and is Love; hereby they mean to explicate the most fecund trinity of the Creator in the [best] way they can. Others maintain that super-exalted God brings forth from Himself Understanding, or Reason [*intellectus seu ratio*]; and they say that this [Understanding] is God from God, and they maintain that it is God the Creator, since every created thing has a cause and a reason why it is *this* and not *that*. Therefore, the one infinite Rational Ground (*ratio*) of all things is God. But the Rational Ground that is Logos, or Word, emanates from [God] the Producer. Hence, when the Omnipotent [God] produces the Word, those things which are enfolded in the Word are made [to exist] in reality. For example, suppose Omnipotence says 'Let there be light'; in that case, the light which is enfolded in the Word will exist actually. Therefore, this Word of God is intellectual, so that according as a thing is conceived to be, in the Understanding, so it is in reality. Furthermore, they say that, third in order, there proceeds a spirit of union, which unites all things into one, so that there is a oneness *qua* one-

ness-of-the-universe; for they posited a world-soul, or world-spirit, which unites all things. Through the world-soul each creature participates in the [world] order, so that [each creature] is a part of the universe. Therefore, it is necessary that this spirit, in the Beginning, be the Beginning. Now, love unites. Hence, this spirit, whose power is diffused throughout the universe, can be said to be Love<sup>52</sup>-that-is-God. Consequently, the union by which the parts are united into one, or into the totality—without which [union] there would be no perfection—has God as its Beginning. In this way, we see clearly that all the wise have attained unto some [conception of] trinity-in-oneness. And so, they will rejoice and give praise when they hear the [same] explanation [of the Trinity] that we have heard.”

28 A Frenchman stated: “I once heard the following premise being discussed among scholars: ‘Eternity is either (1) Unbegotten or (2) Begotten or (3) neither Unbegotten nor Begotten.’ I see that Unbegotten [Eternity] can reasonably be called Omnipotent Father, that Begotten [Eternity can be called] Word, or Son, and that [Eternity which is] neither Unbegotten nor Begotten [can be called] Love, or Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit proceeds from both; He is not Unbegotten, because He is not the Father, and He is not Begotten, because He is not the Son; rather, He proceeds from both. Therefore, there is one Eternity, and it is trine and most simple; there is one trine deity, one trine essence, one trine life, one trine might, one trine power.

“I have now progressed in this school of thought, so that the things which [previously] were obscure are disclosed more clearly than daylight—to the extent that [such light] is presently granted. But since there still remains in the world the greatest contradiction—because some [men] affirm that for the redemption of all [men] the Word was made flesh, whereas others think otherwise—we need to be instructed about how we may attain unto harmony with regard to this difficulty.”

*Word:* The Apostle Peter has agreed to elucidate this segment [of our deliberation together]. Listen to him; for he will satisfactorily instruct [you] regarding whatever things are hidden from you.

And when Peter appeared in their midst, he began as follows:

## XI

29 *Peter:* All disagreement concerning the incarnate Word seems to consist of the following variants: With regard, at the outset, to certain [individuals] who say that the Word of God is not God, this aspect

[of the problem] was already sufficiently explored above. For the Word of God can be nothing but God. Now, this Word is Reason (*ratio*), for “*logos*” in Greek means word, which is reason. For there is no doubt that God, who is the Creator of all rational souls and spirits, has Reason. But this Reason that God has is nothing but God, as was earlier explained;<sup>53</sup> for in God *having* coincides with *being*. For He from whom all things come enfolds all things within Himself.<sup>54</sup> And He is all in all,<sup>55</sup> because He is the Former of all and, thus, is the Form of forms.<sup>56</sup> But the Form of forms enfolds within itself all formable forms. Therefore, the Word, or Reason—the infinite Cause and Measure of whatever things can be made—is God. Accordingly, those who admit that the Word of God is incarnate, or humanified,<sup>57</sup> must confess that that man whom they call Word of God is also God.

30 At this point a Persian spoke up and said: “If,<sup>58</sup> Peter, the Word of God is God, then how could God, who is immutable, become (not God but) a man? [How could] the Creator [become] a creature? For almost all of us, except for a few in Europe, deny this [possibility]. And if there be certain ones among us who are called Christians, they agree with us regarding the impossibility of this thing: viz., that the Infinite be finite and that the Eternal be temporal.”

*Peter*: Together with you, I steadfastly deny that the Eternal is temporal. But since all of you who uphold the law of the Arabs affirm (and rightly so) that Christ is the Word of God, you must confess that Christ is God.

*Persian*: We confess that Christ is the Word, and Spirit, of God in the sense that among all who now exist or have existed no one has had the excellence that is possessed by the Word, and Spirit, of God. Nevertheless, we do not therefore admit that Christ was God, who has no participant. Therefore, lest we lapse into [the doctrine of] a plurality of gods, we deny to be God Him whom we confess to be the nearest unto God.

31 *Peter*: Do you believe that in Christ there was a human nature?

*Persian*: We believe [it], and we affirm that in Him it was, and remained, a true [human nature].

*Peter*: Splendid! Because that nature was human, it was not divine. And so, by means of everything that you have seen in Christ in accordance with that human nature, through which He was like other men, you have not apprehended that Christ was God but rather that He was a man.

*Persian*: That’s right.

*Peter:* On this [point] no one disagrees with you. For in Christ the human nature was most perfect. Through it [Christ] was a true man and was mortal, as are other men; but He was not the Word of God in accordance with that nature. Tell me, then: when you confess that Christ is the Word of God, what do you mean by this [confession]?

32 *Persian:* [We are referring] not [to] nature but to grace—viz., that Christ obtained the excellent grace of God's having placed in Him His own Word.

*Peter:* Didn't [God] place His Word in other prophets as well? For they all spoke by the Word of the Lord and were messengers of the Word of God.

*Persian:* That's true. But Christ was the greatest of all the prophets; and so, to be called Word-of-God befits Him more properly than [it befits] the other prophets. For example, several [written] decrees could contain in themselves the word of a king in regard to particular affairs and particular provinces. But there is only one decree which—because it contains the laws and precepts that all are required to obey—contains that word of the king by which the whole kingdom is ruled.

*Peter:* You seem to have set forth an analogy that serves well the following end: viz., [to show] that the king's word which is written on various sheets of paper does not change these sheets of paper into different natures; for after the inscription of the word their natures remain as they were beforehand; similarly, you say, the human nature remained in Christ.

*Persian:* [Yes, this is what] we say.

33 *Peter:* Agreed. But notice what the difference is between decrees and the heir to the kingdom. In the heir to the kingdom—but not at all in the decrees—there is, properly speaking, the living, free, unrestricted word of the king.

*Persian:* I admit [it]. If a king sends forth into his kingdom an heir, the heir bears the living and unrestricted word of his father.

*Peter:* Properly speaking, isn't [it true that] the heir [is] neither the messenger, or emissary, nor the letter, or decree, but the word? And in the word of the heir aren't there enfolded all the words of the messengers and of the decrees? And although the heir to the kingdom is not the father but the son, nevertheless [the heir] is not alien to the royal nature but is the heir by reason of this equality [of nature with the father].

34 *Persian:* I see your point. But it is countered by the fact that the

king and his son are two. And so, we do not admit that God has a Son. For the Son would be another God than is the Father, just as the son of a king is another man than is his father.

*Peter:* You rightly criticize the analogy. For it is not a proper one if you focus upon the persons. But if you discount the numerical difference of the persons and focus upon the power in the royal dignity of the father and of the son his heir, then you will see that the royal power is one [and the same power] in both the father and the son. [It is present] in the father as in him who is unbegotten; [and it is present] in the son as in him who is the begotten, or living, word of the father.

*Persian:* Continue on.

*Peter:* Suppose, then, that there is such an absolute royal power that is unbegotten and begotten; and suppose that the unbegotten power summons into a close association-of-succession—with the naturally begotten [power]—someone alien in nature, so that the alien nature, in union with the power's nature, jointly and indivisibly possesses the kingdom. Don't the natural succession and the adopted, or freely-bestowed, succession join together in a single inheritance?

*Persian:* Obviously.

35 *Peter:* So, sonship and adoption are united in a single succession to a single kingdom; but the succession of adoption [does] not [exist] in itself but is subsumed in the succession of sonship. For if adoption (which of its own nature is not a successor [to the inheritance]) is to become a successor while sonship exists, then, necessarily, it will not [exist] in itself but will be subsumed in sonship, which is the successor by nature.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, if adoption (in order to become, together with sonship, the successor to the acquisition of the indivisible and most simple inheritance) does not receive the right of succession from itself but rather from sonship, then the adopted successor and the natural successor will not be different, even though the adopted nature and the natural nature will be different. For if the adopted [successor] were different and were not present together with the natural [successor] in [one and] the same person, then how would he join together in the succession to the indivisible inheritance?

In a similar way, then, we must maintain that in Christ the human nature is united to the Word, or to the divine nature, in such way that the human [nature] does not pass over into the divine [nature]. Rather, it adheres to the divine nature so indissolubly that it is not separately personified in itself but is personified in the divine [nature],<sup>60</sup> in order

that, having been called to become a successor to an eternal life with the divine [nature], it would be able to obtain immortality in [and through] the divine [nature].

## XII

**36** *Persian*: I understand the foregoing adequately. But by means of another intelligible example, clarify still further what was just said.

*Peter*: No precise analogies can be formulated. But consider wisdom: is it, in itself, an accident or a substance?

*Persian*: As it exists in itself it is a substance; but as it happens to something else, it is an accident.

*Peter*: All the wisdom in all the wise is from that Wisdom which is Wisdom *per se*, since it is God.

*Persian*: These [points] are obvious.

*Peter*: Isn't one man wiser than another?

*Persian*: Certainly.

*Peter*: Therefore, he who is wiser is nearer to Wisdom *per se*, which is absolutely maximal; and he who is less wise is less near.

*Persian*: Admittedly.

*Peter*: But no man, in accordance with his human nature, is ever so wise that he could not be wiser. For between contracted wisdom (viz., human wisdom) and Wisdom *per se* (i.e., divine, maximal, infinite [wisdom]) there always remains an infinite distance.<sup>61</sup>

*Persian*: This [point] is likewise evident.

**37** *Peter*: [The case would be] similar, then, regarding Absolute Magisterium<sup>62</sup> and contracted magisterium; for in Absolute Magisterium there is infinite knowledge (*ars*), in contracted [magisterium] finite [knowledge]. Therefore, suppose that someone's intellect had such a magisterium and such wisdom that there could not possibly be a greater wisdom or a greater magisterium. In that case, his intellect would be maximally united to Wisdom *per se*, or Magisterium *per se*—to such an extent that this union could not be greater. Wouldn't this intellect have obtained—in the power of the unified, maximal Wisdom (and of the unified, maximal Magisterium) to which it is united—divine power? And in a man having such an intellect, would not the human intellectual nature be most immediately united to the divine nature?—i.e., [united] to Eternal Wisdom, the Word, or Omnipotent Knowledge?

*Persian*: I admit it all. But, still, this union would be [a union] of grace.<sup>63</sup>

38 *Peter*: If there were so great a union of a lower nature to the divine [nature] that [the union] could not be greater, then [the lower nature] would also be united to the divine nature in one person.<sup>64</sup> For as long as the lower nature were not elevated into a personal and hypostatic<sup>65</sup> oneness with the higher [nature, the union] could be greater. Therefore, if a maximal [union] is posited, then the lower [nature] will exist in the higher [nature] by adhering [to it]; and this [union of adherence will occur] not by nature but by grace. But this maximal grace, which cannot be greater, does not differ from nature but, rather, is one with nature. Hence, even if the human nature is united to the divine [nature] through grace, nevertheless since that grace cannot be greater, it terminates most immediately in nature.

*Persian*: No matter how you state [your point]: Still, from the fact that in each man human nature can be elevated through grace unto union with the divine [nature], the man Christ is no more to be called God than is [any] other holy man—even though Christ was the holiest among men.

39 *Peter*: Suppose you were to take note of [the following facts]: (1) that in Christ alone there is present maximal loftiness, which cannot be greater, maximal grace, which cannot be greater, maximal holiness—and so on; (2) that it is not possible that the maximal loftiness, which cannot be greater, be more than one (and similarly regarding grace and holiness); (3) that any loftiness of any prophet, regardless of its degree, is impropotionally distant from that loftiness which cannot be greater—so that, for any given degree of loftiness, there can be, between it and the unitary maximal [loftiness], an infinite number of greater [degrees] than the given [degree] and an infinite number of lesser [degrees] than the maximal [degree]. (The same point holds regarding grace, holiness, prudence, wisdom, magisterium, and each [such perfection]). Now, [if you were to take note of these facts,] then you would see clearly that there can be only one Christ, in whom human nature is united, in oneness of person, to the divine nature. And this [point] even the Arabs confess (although many [of them] do not fully consider it). For the Arabs say that Christ alone is the loftiest [man] both in this world and in the next, and that Christ alone is the Word of God. And not even those who say that Christ is God-and-man mean anything other than that Christ alone is the loftiest man and the Word of God.

*Persian*: It seems that after there has been due consideration of the union that is necessarily present in the loftiest [being], the Arabs can

be led to receive this faith; for through it God's oneness, which they especially seek to safeguard, is not at all slighted but is [fully] preserved. But explain how it can be understood that the human nature [does] not [exist] in itself but is subsumed within the divine [nature] by means of adherence.

- 40 *Peter:* Take an example, even though a remote one. A magnet attracts iron upwards.<sup>66</sup> And while adhering, in mid air, to the magnet, the nature of the iron does not remain [in the air] by means of its own heavy nature, for otherwise it would not remain suspended in the air but in accordance with its nature would fall toward the center of the earth. Rather, while adhering to the magnet, the iron remains in the air by means of the power of the magnet's nature, not by means of the power of its own nature, in accordance with which it could not be there. The reason that the iron's nature is thus disposed toward the magnet's nature is that the iron bears within itself a likeness to the magnet's nature, from which nature it is said to have received its origin. Similarly, if the human intellectual nature<sup>67</sup> were to adhere most closely to the divine intellectual nature, from which it received being, it would adhere to it inseparably, as to the Fount of its life.

*Persian:* I understand.

- 41 *Peter:* The sect of the Arabs, which is large, still confesses that Christ resurrected the dead and created birds from clay;<sup>68</sup> and there are many other things which they expressly confess Jesus Christ (as being the one who had power) to have done. From these [beliefs] they can quite easily be led [further]; for it cannot be denied that Christ did these things by the power of the divine nature, to which the human [nature] was personally united. For the power of Christ by which He commanded to be done these things which the Arabs confess to have been done by Him could not have been in accordance with His human nature unless the human [nature] were assumed into a union with the divine [nature], which has the power to command in such ways.

*Persian:* The Arabs affirm of Christ these and many [other] things, which are written in the Koran. However, to bring the Jews to believe any of this will be more difficult than [to bring] others, since the Jews do not expressly admit anything regarding Christ.

*Peter:* In their Scriptures they have all these [teachings] regarding Christ; but they follow the literal meaning and refuse to understand.<sup>69</sup> However, this resistance of the Jews will not impede harmony, for [the Jews] are few in number and will not be able to trouble the whole world by force of arms.<sup>70</sup>



## XIII

42 To these [remarks] a Syrian [replied]: “In the foregoing, Peter, I have heard that on the basis of what is presupposed in each sect a harmony can be found. But explain how this [claim] can hold true for the present point of discussion.”

*Peter:* I’ll explain. But first of all, tell me: is not God alone eternal and immortal?

*Syrian:* I believe so; for everything except God is originated. Therefore, since [each thing] has a beginning, then in accordance with its own nature [each thing] will also have an end.

*Peter:* Does not almost every religion—of the Jews, the Christians, the Arabs, and most other men—maintain that subsequent to temporal death the mortal human nature of each man will be resurrected to everlasting life?

*Syrian:* Yes, it does.

*Peter:* Therefore, all such [religions] confess that human nature is to be united to the divine and immortal [nature. For otherwise how would human nature pass over unto immortality, if [human nature] did not adhere to the divine nature by means of an inseparable union?

*Syrian:* Faith in the resurrection necessarily presupposes this [view].

43 *Peter:* So if faith holds this [view], then [it is committed to holding that] in some man human nature is united, antecedently, to the divine [nature]—viz., in *that* [man] who is “the Countenance of all nations”<sup>71</sup> and is “the most high Messiah and Christ,” as the Arabs and the Jews call Christ. For He, [who] in the opinion of all [is] nearest to God, will be the one in whom the nature of all men is antecedently united to God. Accordingly, He is the Saviour and the Mediator of all. In Him human nature—which is one, and through which all men are men—is united to the divine and immortal nature, so that in this way all men, who are of this same nature, attain unto resurrection from the dead.

*Syrian:* I understand you to mean that faith in the resurrection of the dead presupposes a union of human nature with the divine [nature], without which union this faith would be impossible. And this union, you say, occurs in Christ; and, hence, faith presupposes Christ.

44 *Peter:* You understand correctly. Herefrom see how it is that all the promises found to have been made to the Jews depend upon faith in the Messiah, or the Mediator, through whom alone the promises, in-

sofar as they pertain to eternal life, were able, and are able, to be fulfilled.

*Syrian:* What about the other sects?

*Peter:* The case is similar. For all men have the desire and the hope only for eternal life in their own human nature; and they have instituted ceremonial purifications for their souls, as well as holy practices, in order that they may become better fitted in nature for that eternal life. Men seek after happiness (which is eternal life) in no other nature than their own. A man wishes to be only a man—not an angel or any other nature.<sup>72</sup> But he wishes to be a happy man who attains ultimate happiness. This happiness is only human life's enjoyment of—i.e., union with—its own Fount, from which flows life itself and [which] is immortal divine life. But how would this [attainment] be possible for man unless in a given [man] the nature common to all [men] were permitted to be elevated unto such a union?—through which given man, as Mediator, all [other] men would be able to attain the final goal of their desires.<sup>73</sup> And this [Mediator] is the Way,<sup>74</sup> because He is the man through whom every [other] man has access to God, who is the [final] goal of desires. Hence, Christ is the one who is presupposed by all who hope to attain ultimate happiness.

45 *Syrian:* These [statements] are most pleasing. For if the human intellect believes that it can attain unto union-with-Wisdom, wherein it obtains eternal nourishment for its own life, then [the human intellect] presupposes that the intellect of some very lofty man has most highly attained unto that union and unto the magisterium through which [the human intellect] hopes some day likewise to arrive at that Wisdom. For if it did not believe this [attainment] to be possible in someone who is the loftiest of all men, then it would hope in vain.

Now, everyone's hope is to be able some day to attain unto the happiness on account of which every religion exists. And there is no deception in this respect, because this hope, which is common to all, stems from an innate desire. From this common hope there follows religious conviction, which, accordingly, is also innate to all. For these reasons I recognize that this Teacher and Mediator, who possesses the supreme and preeminent perfection of human nature, is presupposed by everyone. But perhaps the Jews say that this man of pre-eminent nature, in whom all the deficiencies of all men are remedied,<sup>75</sup> has not yet been born but will be born some day.

*Peter:* It is sufficient that both Arabs and Christians, as well as others who have borne witness by their own blood, attest (on the basis

of the deeds which the prophets prophesied of Him and which He worked superhumanly while in the world) that He has come.

## XIV

46 *Spaniard*: With respect to the Messiah, whom the greater part of the world confesses to have come, there will perhaps be another difficulty concerning His birth; for Christians and Arabs maintain that He was born of the Virgin Mary, whereas others hold this for impossible.

*Peter*: All who believe that Christ has come confess that He was born of a virgin. For since He is the ultimate perfection of [human] nature and is alone the loftiest [man], then of what father was He to have been the son? For every begetting father so differs, in perfection of nature, from ultimate perfection that he cannot communicate to his son ultimate perfection—[a perfection] than which there can be none higher and which is not possible except in one man. Only that Father who is the Creator of [human] nature can do this.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, the loftiest [man] has as His father only Him from whom comes all paternity. Consequently, the loftiest [man] is conceived in the womb of a virgin by the divine power; and in the virgin the loftiest fecundity was present together with the virginity. Hence, Christ was born unto us in such way that He is very closely united to all men. For He has as His father Him from whom each man's father possesses the fact that he is a father; and He has as His mother the one who was not carnally united to any man. Thus, in this way, each [human being] finds in Christ, on account of the very close union, his own nature in ultimate perfection.

47 *Turk*: There still remains no small difference, since Christians maintain that Christ was crucified by the Jews, whereas others deny it.

*Peter*: The fact that certain deny that Christ was crucified and assert that He still lives and will come at the time of the Antichrist results from their being ignorant of the mystery of His death.<sup>77</sup> And because He is going to come, as they [rightly] maintain, they believe that He will come in mortal flesh. [They believe this] on the supposed ground that otherwise He could not subdue the Antichrist. As for their denying that He was crucified by the Jews, they seem to do so out of reverence for Christ—on the supposed ground that such men could not have had any power over Christ. But note that the historical accounts, which are numerous, and the preaching of the Apostles, who died for the truth, ought assuredly to be believed: viz., [the testimony] that

Christ died in this manner. For the Prophets, too, foretold of Christ that He was to be condemned to a most shameful death—which was death on the Cross. And here is the reason [that He died]: Christ came, as one sent by God the Father, to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven; and regarding that Kingdom He made claims which were able to be proved by Him in no better way than by means of the witness of His own blood. Hence, in order to be most obedient to God the Father and in order to furnish complete certainty for the truth that He Himself was proclaiming, He died, by a most shameful death, so that no man would refuse to accept the truth for the sake of whose attestation Christ was known by him to have voluntarily accepted death. For [Christ] preached the Kingdom of Heaven, proclaiming that man could attain unto it, being capable of receiving it.

In comparison with that Kingdom the life of this world—[a life] which is loved so tenaciously by all—is to be esteemed as nothing.<sup>78</sup> And in order to make known the fact that truth is the life that is present in the Kingdom of Heaven, He gave the life that He had in this world—[gave it] for the sake of truth—so that in this way He might most perfectly proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven, might free the world from the ignorance by which it prefers this life to the future one, and might give Himself as a sacrifice for many. [Indeed, He sacrificed His life] so that, being lifted up on the Cross in the sight of all, He might draw all [men] unto belief, and might glorify the Gospel, strengthen the faint-hearted, give Himself freely for the redemption of many, and might do all [these] things in the best way in which they could be done, so that men might attain unto saving faith and unto the hope of obtaining salvation and unto a love of keeping God's commandments.

48 Suppose, then, the Arabs were to attend (1) to the benefit of Christ's death and (2) to the fact that it pertained to Christ, as one sent by God, to sacrifice Himself in order to fulfill His father's desire, and (3) to the fact that nothing was more glorious for Christ than to die for the sake of truth and of obedience—[to die] even by a most shameful death. [In that case,] they would not take away from Christ the glory of the Cross—[a glory] through which He merited to be the loftiest [man] and to be super-exalted in the glory of the Father.

Moreover, if Christ preached that men after their deaths would obtain immortality through resurrection, how was the world able to be made certain of this [fact] in a better way than [by] His freely having died and His having arisen and presented Himself as alive?<sup>79</sup> For the world was made certain, by means of an ultimate certification, when

it heard of the man Christ's having died openly on the Cross and having arisen publicly from the dead and being alive—[heard of these things] through the testimony of many who saw Him alive and who themselves died in order to be faithful witnesses to His resurrection. Therefore, the most perfect proclamation of the Gospel was that which Christ exhibited in Himself and which was so perfect that it was I not able to be more perfect, but which without His death and resurrection could always have been more perfect. Hence, whoever believes that Christ most perfectly fulfilled the will of God the Father ought to confess all those things without which the proclamation of the Gospel would not have been most perfect.

49 Furthermore, note that the Kingdom of Heaven was hidden from all until the time of Christ. For this is the Gospel of Christ: viz., His proclaiming the Kingdom that was unknown to all. Therefore, while the Kingdom of Heaven was completely unknown, there was no faith [with regard to it] and no hope of attaining unto it; nor was anyone able to love it. Nor was there the possibility that any man would attain unto this Kingdom if human nature was not yet elevated unto that [loftiest] exaltation, so as to be made a partaker of the divine nature. Therefore, Christ disclosed, in every manner of disclosing, the Kingdom of Heaven. But no one can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven unless he divests himself of the kingdom of this world through death. For the mortal must divest itself of its mortality, i.e., of its capability of dying; and this [divestment] comes about only by means of death. [For] thereafter [the mortal] can put on immortality.<sup>80</sup> Now, if the mortal man Christ has not yet died, then He has not yet divested Himself of mortality; and so, He has not yet entered into the Kingdom of Heaven, wherein no mortal can be present. Therefore, if He who is the first fruits, and the first born,<sup>81</sup> of all men has not disclosed the Kingdom of Heaven, then the human nature<sup>82</sup> that is united to God has not yet been led into the Kingdom. Hence, no man would be able to be present in the Kingdom of Heaven, since the human nature that is united to God would not yet have been led into [the Kingdom]. But all men who believe that the Kingdom of Heaven exists maintain the contrary position; for they all confess that some holy men in their own respective sect have obtained happiness. Therefore, everyone's faith—[being a faith] which confesses that holy men are present within the eternal glory—presupposes that Christ died and ascended into Heaven.

## XV

50 *German*: [You have stated] all these [points] excellently. But with regard to [the notion of] happiness I see no small number of discrepancies. For to the Jews are promised, in accordance with their law, only temporal things, which consist of sensible goods. But to the Arabs, in accordance with their law, which is written down in the Koran, are promised only bodily [goods]—though everlasting ones. By contrast, the Gospel promises angelic-likeness, i.e., that men will be like angels, who have nothing bodily.

*Peter*: In this world what is it that can be conceived [to be such that] the desire for it does not wane but waxes continually?

*German*: All things temporal wane; only intellectual things never do so. If eating, drinking, reveling, and any such thing are sometimes pleasant, they are also sometimes unpleasant; and they are inconstant. But knowing and understanding and beholding the truth with the mind's eye are always pleasant. And the older a man gets, the more pleasant these are; and the more of each he has, the more his desire to have [each of them] waxes.

51 *Peter*: So if the desire is to be everlasting and if the partaking of food is to be everlasting, then the partaking will belong not to the temporal or to the sensible life but rather to the intellectual life. Hence, although in the law of the Koran there is found the promise of a paradise where there are rivers of wine and of honey and where there is a multitude of maidens, nonetheless many [individuals] abhor these things in this world. How will they be happy if they obtain *there* things which *here* they do not want to have? The Koran says<sup>83</sup> that [in Paradise] there are very lovely black maidens, with eyes that have a large and very white sclera. But in this present world no German, not even one given to carnal vices, would desire such maidens. Hence, these [statements] must be understood illustratively. For elsewhere [the Koran] forbids the occurrence of copulation (and all other delights of the flesh) in churches or synagogues or mosques; and we must not believe that mosques are holier than Paradise. How is it, then, that those things which are promised there in Paradise are forbidden to be done here in mosques?

Elsewhere [the Koran] says that all those things are found there because the realization of whatever is there desired must there occur. Hereby [the Koran] shows sufficiently what it means<sup>84</sup> when it says that such things are found there. For since these things are so much

desired in this world, and on the assumption that in the other world there will be an equal desire, then [such things, the Koran meant,] are found there in an excellent manner and in an abundant number. For in no other way than by means of this likeness was [the Koran] able to express the view that that [future] life is the fulfillment of our desires. To an uneducated people [the Koran] did not aim to speak of other, more hidden, things but aimed only to speak of those things which seem more enjoyable according to the senses. It proceeded in this way] so that a people who have no appreciation for the things of the spirit, would not minimize what was promised.

52 Hence, the entire concern of the one who wrote *that* law seems mainly to have been to turn the people away from idolatry. And to that end he made such promises and posited all [these] things. But he did not condemn the Gospel; indeed, he praised it, in that he gave [his readers] to understand that the happiness which is promised in the Gospel is not inferior to bodily delight. And those among the Arabs who are discerning and wise know this to be true. The intellectual happiness that results from the vision, or enjoyment, of God and of truth is preferred by Avicenna<sup>85</sup> incomparably more than the happiness described in the law of the Arabs—even though Avicenna was [an adherent] of that law. The case is similar regarding their other wise men, too. Therefore, with regard to the present [issue] there will be no difficulty in rendering harmonious all the sects. For we will say that that [future] happiness is above everything that can be written of or spoken of, since [it is] the fulfillment of every desire and is the attainment of the good in its own Fount and the attainment of life in immortality.

53 *German:* Then, what about the Jews, who take the promise to refer not to the Kingdom of Heaven but only to temporal things?

*Peter:* For the sake of keeping and sanctifying the law, the “Jews often deliver themselves over unto death. Hence, unless they believed that after death they would attain happiness because of their preferring to life a zeal for the law, they would not [choose to] die. Therefore, the Jews do not believe that there is no eternal life and that they cannot attain it; otherwise, none of them would die for the law. Rather, the happiness that they expect is expected by them not on the basis of the works of the law (for their laws do not promise happiness) but on the basis of a faith which presupposes Christ, as was said earlier.<sup>86</sup>

## XVI

54 *Tartar*: I have here heard many [points] that were previously unknown to me. The numerous and simple Tartars, who worship the one God as best they know how, are amazed at the variety of rites on the part of others who also worship this same God with them. For example, [the Tartars] deride the fact that certain Christians (and all Arabs and Jews) are circumcised, that some [worshippers] are marked on their faces with brandings, and that others are baptized. Moreover, there is such great diversity regarding marriage that some given [man] has only one [wife], whereas another [man] has one true [wife] united to him in marriage but has more than one concubine, and still another [man] has more than one legal wife. Furthermore, with regard to sacrifices, the rites are so diverse that they cannot [all] be recounted. Among these varieties the sacrifice on the part of Christians wherein they offer bread and wine and declare [these] to be the body and the blood of Christ—a sacrifice which they eat and drink subsequent to the offering—seems especially abominable; [for] they devour Him whom they worship. I do not understand how a unity can result with respect to these [different practices], which vary even from place to place and from time to time. But unless it does result, persecution will not cease; for diversity begets divisiveness and enmity, animosities and wars.

55 Thereupon, at the instruction of the Word, Paul, the teacher of the Gentiles, began to speak: “It is necessary to show that salvation of soul results not from works but from faith. (For Abraham, the Father-of-faith for all believers—whether Christians or Arabs or Jews—believed God, and [this faith] was imputed to him as justice.<sup>87</sup> And the soul of the just man will inherit eternal life.) Once this [fact]<sup>88</sup> is admitted, the varieties of rites will not be disturbing, for they were instituted and received as perceptible signs of true faith. Now, the signs [themselves] admit of change, though the signified object does not.

*Tartar*: Explain how it is that faith saves.

*Paul*: If God were to promise something on the basis of His generosity and grace alone, wouldn't we have to believe Him who has the power to bestow all things and who is truthful?

*Tartar*: Yes, of course. No one can go wrong in believing Him. And it would be unfitting for someone-who-does-not-believe-Him to obtain anything by grace.

*Paul*: What, then, justifies him who obtains justice?



*Tartar:* Not his merits. Otherwise it would not be [a question of] grace but rather [of] debt.

*Paul:* Exactly. Now, because no living [soul] is justified in the sight of God by works, but rather by grace, the Omnipotent One bestows upon whom He will that which He wills to. Accordingly, if anyone is to be worthy of obtaining [fulfillment of] the promise that was made on the basis of grace alone, then he will have to believe God. Therefore, he is justified on the basis of the following fact: viz., that he obtains [fulfillment of] the promise solely because he believes God and expects God's word to be kept.

56 *Tartar:* After God has promised, it is *just* that His promises be kept. Hence, the believer of God is justified by [fulfillment of] the promise rather than by faith.

*Paul:* God, who promised to Abraham a descendant in whom all [men] would be blessed, justified Abraham, in order that he would obtain [fulfillment of] the promise. But had Abraham not believed God, he would not have obtained either justification or [fulfillment of] the promise.

*Tartar:* True.

*Paul:* Therefore, in Abraham faith was so efficacious that the fulfillment of the promise was just—a promise that otherwise would not have been either just or fulfilled.

57 *Tartar:* What, then, did God promise?

*Paul:* God promised Abraham that in Isaac He would give him a descendant in whom all nations would be blessed. And this promise was made at a time when according to the common course of nature it was impossible for his wife, Sarah, to conceive from him and to beget. But because Abraham believed, he obtained Isaac as a son. Thereafter, God tested Abraham, [commanding him] to offer up and to slay the boy Isaac, with respect to whom the promise of a descendant was made. And Abraham obeyed God, believing nonetheless that the promise would be [fulfilled] even in terms of a dead son who would be subsequently resurrected.<sup>89</sup> Because God found such great faith in Abraham, Abraham was justified and the promise was fulfilled in a descendant who descended from him through Isaac.

*Tartar:* Which descendant is this?

*Paul:* Christ. For in Christ all nations obtain the divine blessing.

*Tartar:* What blessing is this?

*Paul:* The divine blessing is the final end of our desires, i.e., is the happiness that is called eternal life—[a life] about which you have

[already] heard enough in the foregoing [discussion].

*Tatar:* So do you mean that in Christ God promised to us the blessing of eternal happiness?

*Paul:* Yes, I do. Therefore, it is necessary to believe God just as did Abraham, so that he who believes in this manner will be justified together with faithful Abraham, to the end of obtaining the [fulfilled] promise in a descendant of Abraham, viz., Christ Jesus. This [fulfilled] promise is the divine blessing that enfolds every good.

**58** *Tatar:* Do you mean, then, that that faith alone provides justification for receiving eternal life?

*Paul:* I do.

*Tartar:* How will you give to the simple Tartars an understanding of [all] this, so that they may grasp the fact that Christ is the one in whom they can obtain happiness?

*Paul:* You have heard that not only Christians but also Arabs, confess that Christ is the loftiest of all those who have existed or will exist in this world or the next and that He is the Countenance of all nations.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, if the blessing of all nations is present in one descendant, then [this descendant] can be only Christ.

*Tartar:* What sign do you adduce?

*Paul:* I adduce the testimony both of Arabs and of Christians to the effect that the spirit that enlivens the dead is the spirit of Christ. Therefore, if the spirit of life is present in Christ, who is able to enliven whom He wills to, then this is the spirit without which no dead man can be resurrected or any spirit live eternally. For fullness of divinity and grace indwell the spirit of Christ. From this fullness all who are to be saved receive the grace of salvation.

*Tartar:* I am pleased to have heard these [points] from you, Teacher of the Gentiles, because together with what I heard previously they suffice for our purpose. And I see that this faith is necessary for salvation—[a faith] without which no one will be saved. But I ask whether faith suffices.

*Paul:* Without faith it is impossible for anyone to please God.<sup>91</sup> But faith has to be formed [faith];<sup>92</sup> for without works [faith] is dead.<sup>93</sup>

**59** *Tartar:* What works are they?

*Paul:* If you believe God, then you keep His commandments., For how is it that you believe God to be God if you are not concerned to carry out what He commands?

*Tartar:* It is appropriate that the commandments of God be kept.

But the Jews say that they have His commandments through Moses, the Arabs [say that they have them] through Muhammad, and the Christians through Jesus. And possibly other nations worship their own prophets, through whose hands they claim to have received the divine precepts. So how will we arrive at a harmony [of the sects]?

*Paul:* The divine commandments are very terse and very well known to everyone and are common to all nations. Indeed, the light that shows us these [commandments] is created together with the rational soul.<sup>94</sup> For God speaks within us, [commanding us] to love Him from whom we receive being and not to do unto another anything except that which we want done unto us. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of God's law,<sup>95</sup> and all [other] laws are reducible to the law of love.

**60** *Tartar:* I do not doubt that both faith and the law of love—about both of which you have spoken—will be accepted by the Tartars. But I have grave doubts about the rites; for I do not know how in the world they will accept circumcision, which they deride.

*Paul:* The reception of circumcision has no bearing on the reality of salvation. For circumcision does not save; rather, there is salvation without it. Nevertheless, when some man does not believe that circumcision is necessary in order to obtain salvation but yet he allows it to be done to his foreskin in order to be more like Abraham and his followers even in this respect, then such a man is not condemned on account of his circumcision, provided he have the previously mentioned faith. Thus, Christ was circumcised and many of the Christians after Him—as are still the Ethiopian Jacobites and others, who [though circumcised] are not circumcised in the belief that [circumcision] is a sacrament necessary for salvation. Yet, it is quite uncertain how peace can be maintained among believers if some are circumcised and others are not. Hence, since the greater part of the world is without circumcision and since we have noted that circumcision is not necessary, then I deem it useful, for the sake of preserving peace, that the minority conform itself to the majority, to which it is united in faith. Indeed, if for the sake of peace the majority were to conform itself to the minority and to receive circumcision, then I would deem that this should be done, in order that in this way peace might be established on the basis of mutual agreement. For if in this way other nations would receive faith from the Christians and Christians would receive (for the sake of peace) circumcision from these nations, then peace would better result and better be established. But I think that the work-

ing out of this [conformity] would be difficult. Therefore, let it suffice that peace be established with respect to faith and the law of love, while we mutually tolerate rites.

## XVII

**61** *Armenian:* Since among Christians baptism is thought to be a necessary sacrament, how do you think it should be administered?

*Paul:* Baptism is a sacrament of faith. For he who believes that in Christ Jesus he can obtain justification believes that through Christ [he can obtain] the removal of his sins. Each believer will manifest this cleansing which is signified in the baptismal washing. For baptism is nothing other than a confession of that faith-[in-Christ] by means of a sacramental sign. If someone did not want to confess his faith in word and by whatever signs were instituted by Christ for this purpose, then he would not be a believer. Baptismal washings occur, for religious devotion, both among the Hebrews and among the Arabs; [accordingly,] it will not be difficult for them to accept, for their profession of faith, the washing instituted by Christ.

**62** *Armenian:* It seems that this sacrament must be accepted, since it is necessary for salvation.

*Paul:* *Faith* is necessary in adults, who can be saved without the sacrament when they cannot obtain [it]. But where they can obtain [it], they cannot be called believers if they do not wish to manifest themselves as believers through the sacrament of regeneration.

*Armenian:* What about children?

*Paul:* [Hebrews and Arabs] will quite readily consent to their children's being baptized. Since for religious reasons they have allowed males to be circumcised on the eighth day, then the transformation of circumcision into baptism will be acceptable [to them], and a choice will be given [to them] as to whether or not they wish to be content with baptism [alone].

## XVIII

**63** *Bohemian:* With regard to all the matters that have [already] been set forth, it might be possible for a harmony [among the nations] to be reached; and yet, with regard to [the question of] sacrifices, it will be most difficult [to obtain such a harmony]. For we know that Christians cannot, in order to please others, give up the sacrifice of bread and wine vis-à-vis the sacrament of the Eucharist; for such a sacrifice was instituted by Christ. But that the other nations, which have no use

for thus sacrificing, would accept this [Christian] mode is hard to imagine—especially since they say that [it] is madness to believe in the transformation of bread into the flesh of Christ and of wine into the blood of Christ, and afterwards to consume the sacramental objects.

*Paul:* This sacrament of the Eucharist symbolizes nothing other than the fact that by grace we are going to obtain, in Christ Jesus, the replenishing nourishment of eternal life, just as in the present world we are replenished by means of bread and wine. Therefore, since we believe that Christ is food for our minds, we partake of Him beneath the outward forms that nourish our bodies. And since we have to agree in our belief that in Christ we obtain nourishment for the life of our spirits, why shall we not manifest this belief by means of the sacrament of the Eucharist? We must hope that all believers will wholly desire the following: viz., in this world, through faith, to taste of that food which, in the next world, will truly be the food of our life.

**64** *Bohemian:* How will all nations become persuaded that in the sacrament of the Eucharist the substance of the bread is transformed into the body of Christ?

*Paul:* He who is a believer knows that the Word of God in Christ Jesus will transport us from the unhappiness of this world unto sonship with God<sup>96</sup> and unto possession of eternal life, since nothing is impossible for God.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, if we believe that this [will occur] and if we hope for it [to occur], then we will not doubt that the Word of God, in accordance with Christ's ordaining, can change bread into flesh. And if nature accomplishes this [transformation] in the case of animals, how is it that the Word, through whom God made even the aeons,<sup>98</sup> could not accomplish it? Therefore, the necessity of faith requires [us] to believe that it [occurs]. For if it is possible that in Christ Jesus we sons of Adam, who are earthly, shall be transformed by the Word of God into sons of the immortal God (indeed, we believe and hope that this is going to occur), and [if it is possible] that in that day we will be as is Jesus,<sup>99</sup> the Word of God the Father, then we must also believe in the transubstantiation of bread into flesh and of wine into blood through the agency of this same Word, through whom bread is bread, wine is wine, flesh is flesh, blood is blood, and through whom nature transforms food into him who is fed.

**65** *Bohemian:* This [doctrine of the] transformation of the substance of bread is difficult to grasp.

*Paul:* [It can] very easily [be grasped] by faith. For this [truth] is

attainable by the mind alone, which alone views a substance with respect to *the fact that it is*, though not with respect to *what it is*;<sup>100</sup> for substance precedes every accident. And so, since substance is neither a quality nor a quantity and since [in the Eucharist] only the substance is transformed, so that there is no longer the substance of the bread but rather there is the substance of flesh, this transformation is only immaterial, because it is very far removed from whatever is attainable by the senses. Therefore, as a result of this transformation, the quantity of flesh is not increased, nor is [the flesh] multiplied in number. For this reason there is only one substance of flesh into which the substance of the bread is transformed, even though bread is offered up on different places and even though there is more than one piece of bread that is used in the sacrifice.

*Bohemian*: I understand your doctrine, which is most pleasing to me. [It states] that the sacrament is a sacrament that pertains to [receiving] the nourishment of eternal life, through which nourishment we obtain—in Jesus Christ, the Son of God—the inheritance that belongs to sons of God. Moreover, [it states] that in this sacrament of the Eucharist there is a likeness of this [attainment] and that we attain [thereunto] by the mind alone and that we taste and grasp by faith. [But] what if these hidden truths are not grasped? For the uneducated will perhaps shrink back not only from believing this [doctrine] but also from partaking of such very great sacramental objects.

66 *Paul*: This sacrament, insofar as it pertains to the perceptible signs (provided faith itself be maintained) is not of such necessity that there is no salvation without it. For believing—and thereby eating of the food of life—suffices for salvation. And so, with regard to the distribution of the sacrament: no law of necessity is imposed regarding *whether* and *to whom* and *how often* it ought to be administered to the people. Therefore, if someone who has faith judges himself to be unworthy to approach unto the table of the Supreme King, this humility ought rather to be praised. Likewise, with regard to the use and the ritual of the sacrament: whatever will seem to the leaders of the church to be the most useful for the circumstances in each given region<sup>101</sup> may admissibly be ordained—provided faith is always maintained—so that by means of a common law peaceful unity of faith may continue, no less intact as a result of the diversity of rites.

## XIX

67 *Englishman*: What will be done regarding the other sacraments?:

viz., marriage, holy orders, confirmation, and extreme unction.

*Paul:* It is necessary to make great allowances for the weakness of men, unless [doing so] militates against eternal salvation. For to seek exact conformity in all respects is rather to disturb the peace. Nevertheless, we must hope that with regard to marriage and to holy orders a harmony may be found. For on the basis of the law of nature marriage seems to have been instituted in one way or another among all nations in order that one [man] would have one true spouse. So too, a priesthood is likewise found in every religion. Therefore, with regard to these [institutions] that are in common, there will be a readier harmony, and the Christian religion will be shown to maintain, in both of these sacraments, a quite praiseworthy purity even in the judgment of all others.

*Englishman:* What about fastings, ecclesiastical offices, abstinence from [various] foods and drinks, forms of prayers, and other such things?

*Paul:* Where conformity of mode cannot be had, nations are entitled to their own devotions and ceremonies, provided faith and peace be maintained. Perhaps as a result of a certain diversity devotion will even be increased, Since each nation will endeavor with zeal and diligence to make its own rite more splendid, in order that in this respect it may excel some other [nation] and thereby obtain greater merit with God and [greater] praise in the world.

**68** After these topics were discussed in the foregoing way with the wise [men] of the nations, there were exhibited very many books authored by those who had written about the observances of the ancients—excellent books, indeed, in every language (as, for example, among the Latins, Marcus Varro; among the Greeks, Eusebius, who gathered examples of the diversity of the religions; and very many others). After these [writings] were examined, it was ascertained that the entire diversity [among the religions] lay in the rites rather than in the worship of one God. From all the writings, which had been collected into one, it was learned that since the very beginning all [men] have always presupposed God and worshiped Him in all their religious practices; nonetheless, because the simple people were oftentimes led astray through the adverse power of the Prince of darkness,<sup>102</sup> they did not [always] attend to what they were doing.

Therefore, in the loftiest domain of reason<sup>103</sup> a harmony among the religions was reached, in the aforeshown manner. And the King of kings commanded that the wise [men] return and lead their nations

unto a oneness of true worship and that administering spirits guide and assist them [in this undertaking]. Moreover, [He commanded] that thereafter [these wise men], having full power [to speak] for all [in their respective nations], assemble in Jerusalem, as being a common center, and in the names of all [their countrymen] accept a single faith and establish a perpetual peace with respect thereto, so that the Creator of all, who is blessed forever, may be praised in peace.



## ABBREVIATIONS

- CA *Cribratio Alkorani* [Vol. VIII (edited by Ludwig Hagemann) of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1986)].
- DI *De Docta Ignorantia* [Latin-German edition: *Schriften des Nikolaus von Kues in deutscher Übersetzung*, published by F. Meiner Verlag. **Book I** (Vol. 264a), edited and translated by Paul Wilpert; 3rd edition with minor improvements by Hans G. Senger, 1979. **Book II** (Vol. 264b), edited and translated by Paul Wilpert; 2nd edition with minor improvements by Hans G. Senger, 1977. **Book III** (Vol. 264c); Latin text edited by Raymond Klibansky; introduction and translation by Hans G. Senger, 1977].
- DP *De Possest* [Latin text contained in J. Hopkins, *A Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa* (Minneapolis: Banning Press, 3rd edition, 1986)].
- DVD *De Visione Dei* [Latin text contained in J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism: Text, Translation, and Interpretive Study of De Visione Dei* (Minneapolis: Banning Press, 1985 and 1988)].
- M *Monologion* [by Anselm of Canterbury. Latin text contained in J. Hopkins, *A New, Interpretive Translation of St. Anselm's Monologion and Proslogion* (Minneapolis: Banning Press, 1986)].
- MFCG *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft*, edited by Rudolf Haubst. A continuing series published in Mainz, Germany by Matthias-Grünewald Verlag.
- NA *De Li Non Aliud* [Latin text contained in J. Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-other: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Li Non Aliud* (Minneapolis: Banning Press, 3rd edition, 1987)].
- P *Proslogion* [by Anselm of Canterbury; see citation under "M" above].
- PF *De Pace Fidei* [Vol. VII (edited by Raymond Klibansky and Hildebrand Bascour) of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1970)].
- S Schmitt, F. S. [Schmitt edition of *Sancti Anselmi Opera Omnia* as reprinted in Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt by F. Frommann Verlag, 1968; e.g., 'S I, 237:7' indicates Vol. I, p. 237, line 7].
- TB Theodor Bibliander, editor. *Machumetis Sarracenorum Principis Vita ac Doctrina*. Basel, 1543 (3 vols.); 2nd, revised edition published in Zurich in 1550. In the notes below, page references are to the Basel edition.
- VS *De Venatione Sapientiae* [Vol. XII (edited by Raymond Klibansky and Hans G. Senger) of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1982)].

## PRAENOTANDA

1. All references to Nicholas of Cusa's works are to the Latin texts—specifically to the following texts in the following editions (unless explicitly indicated otherwise):

A. Heidelberg Academy edition of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia: De Concordantia Catholica; Sermones; De Coniecturis; De Deo Abscondito; De Quaerendo Deum; De Filiatione Dei; De Dato Patris Luminum; Coniectura de Ultimis Diebus; De Genesi; Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae; Idiota* (1983 edition) *de Sapientia, de Mente, de Staticis Experimentis; De Pace Fidei; De Beryllo* (1988); *Cribratio Alkorani; De Principio; De Venatione Sapientiae; Compendium; De Apice Theoriae*.

B. Texts authorized by the Heidelberg Academy and published in the Latin-German editions of Felix Meiner Verlag's Philosophische Bibliothek: *De Docta Ignorantia*

C. Editions by J. Hopkins: *De Visione Dei* (1988); *De Possess* (1986); *De Li Non Aliud* (1987).

The references given for some of these treatises indicate book and chapter, for others margin number and line, and for still others page and line. Readers should have no difficulty determining which is which when they consult the particular Latin text. E.g., 'DI II, 6 (125:19-20)' indicates *De Docta Ignorantia*, Book II, Chapter 6, margin number 125, lines 19-20.

*N.B.*: The arabic-numeral references to *De Pace Fidei* are to the bold-faced margin numbers and to line numbers within each division by bold-faced margin numbers. E.g., 'PF XVII (62: 1)' indicates *De Pace Fidei*, Section XVII, bold faced margin number 62, line 1. The only exception to this system of citation occurs in the *Addenda et Corrigenda*, where reference to *De Pace Fidei* is by page number and line number on that page.

2. All references to the Koran are in terms of the English translation by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1980 printing). A reference such as 'Surah 7:29' indicates Surah 7, verse 29. The Koran chapter numbers used by Nicholas of Cusa do not correspond to the numbers that have become standard and that are found in Pickthall's translation.

3. References to the Bible are given in terms of the Douay version. (References to chapters and verses of the Psalms include, in parentheses, the King James' locations.)

4. The locations of Nicholas of Cusa's allusions to the Koran are, for the most part, the ones to be found in the respective translations of *Cribratio Alkorani* by Paul Naumann and Gustav Hölscher and in the Latin text edited by Ludwig Hagemann. If some of these locations in the Koran seem not to correspond to Nicholas's Latin allusions, it is because the Latin translation used by Nicholas was frequently inaccurate.

## NOTES TO THE TRANSLATION OF *DE PACE FIDEI*

1. Regarding the translation of the title see the remarks made in the Introduction to the present volume.
2. *De Pace Fidei* (hereafter abbreviated as *PF*) seems to have been written during the second half of September 1453. [R. Klibansky summarizes the considerations that lead to assigning this date. See Vol. 7, p. xii of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1970).] Nicholas, in the text marked by this present footnote, is referring to the events surrounding the fall of Constantinople to Muhammad II (1451-1481). The “certain man” to whom Nicholas refers may be himself, who visited Constantinople in 1437. Reference to having had a vision is, presumably, a literary device.
3. I Corinthians 4:7.
4. “Shadow” is here used metaphorically to indicate a human body.
5. Cf. *DP* 38:11-14.
6. Note Nicholas’s treatise *De Deo Abscondito*, written in 1444.
7. God is not any of the created things, whether they be taken discretely or as a totality. Here, as also in *DI*, Nicholas clearly rejects pantheism. Cf. *DI* II, 2 (100:3-4).
8. Nicholas everywhere teaches that *finiti ad infinitum nulla proportio est*. Note, for example, *DI* I, 3 (9:4-5).
9. Cf. *De Dato Patris Luminum* 2 (99:1-17).
10. I.e., if You will deign to reveal Yourself, so that all peoples will be saved ....
11. This passage (viz., “*non est nisi religio una in rituum varietate*”) is a key to understanding this entire treatise. Cf. *CA* I, 2 (27:9-10).
12. Cf. *PF* XIX (last speech in 67), which repeats the view that the diversity of rites may foster increased devotion.
13. Nicholas distinguishes between *cultus patriae* and *veneratio dulia*. [Cf. *PF* VI (I8:last 5 lines).] The former. is the worship of God as Sovereign; the latter is the veneration that is appropriate to holy creatures.
14. The Supreme King is God, who is depicted in Scripture as sitting upon a throne. Ps. 46:9 (47:8). Isaiah 6:1. Revelation 3:21; 5:13.
15. Satan is the Prince of darkness, the Prince of ignorance. Note Colossians 1:13 and Ephesians 6:12.
16. Hebrews 1:2.
17. Note Romans 7:22, II Corinthians 4:16, and Ephesians 3:16.
18. John 1:14. Colossians 1:18.
19. I.e., visitation by God the Holy Spirit. Cf. Acts 15:14.
20. *PF* XIX (68:15).
21. *PF* XII (36). *CA* II, 17 (146 and 148).
22. “... an appreciative desiring of the things that are subject to the senses”: i.e., an appreciative desiring of the things that are objects of the senses.
23. “... shines forth from out of a shadowy image . . .”: i.e., shines forth from out of the body to which it is united.
24. *DVD* 16 (71:12-15). *VS* 1.
25. *PF* IV (11:3). *DI* I, 7 (21:3-5).
26. According to Nicholas number owes whatever-it-is to oneness. *DI* I, 5 (14:1-

- 4).
27. Cf. Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion* 4 (*S I*, 17:11-18).
28. *DI I*, 7 (21:2- 10). *DI I*, 5 (14:1-8).
29. See n. 13 above.
30. Cf. the life of Abraham, who in II Paralipomenon (II Chronicles) 20:7, as well as in James 2:23, is called a friend of God.
31. Asclepius, son of Apollo, is the god of healing.
32. Psalms 134:16 (135:16). Psalms 113:5, second version (115:5).
33. Satan is the Seducer.
34. Regarding the translation “wisest” for the comparative form “*sapientiorum*,” cf., below, n. 219 of *CA*, Notes to the Translation: Book Three.
35. *DVD* 13 (58:9-12).
36. I.e., they are to adore God as the Originator, or Creator, of the universe. (Cf. *DP* 27:9-21.) Regarding the grammatical use of “*quid*” in this sentence, cf *VS* 13 (38:3).
37. *DI II*, 1 (91:12-13).
38. *DI I*, 7 (19:8-18). *CA II*, 7.
39. “. . . some such trine distinction...”: viz., a distinction such as the distinction between oneness, equality of oneness, and union (but not this exact distinction!). Nicholas maintains that there is a trinitarian image of God in every created thing. See *DP* 47-48. Also see *PF IX*.
40. “Herefrom”: i.e., from a consideration of creatures’ triunity.
41. In the several lines of translation that precede the numeral that marks the present note [viz., in *PF VII* (21:18-22)] I do not follow the punctuation of the Latin text as edited by R. Klibansky and H. Bascour. Cf. the punctuation of the Paris edition.
42. *DI I*, 9 (26). *CA II*, 7.
43. *DVD* 10 (42).
44. *DVD* 17.
45. *DI I*, 19 (57: 10-11). *DVD* 17 (78:6-8). *DP* 50. *CA II*, 10 (111: 12-15).
46. *DVD* 14 (64:4-5).
47. *DI I*, 9 (25). *NA* 5 (19).
48. Isaiah 66:9. *CA II*, 8 (108:6-8).
49. See *CA I*, 18 and 20—and the references given there. See also *CA III*, 4 (174).
50. *CA II*, 11.
51. Psalms 32:6 (33:6).
52. The single English word “love” adequately translates the Latin “*amor seu caritas*.” Cf, below, n. 30 of Notes to *Cribratio Alkorani*: Book Two.
53. *PF IX* (26).
54. *DI II*, 3.
55. *DI II*, 5 (117:6-7). *NA* 14 (65:13).
56. *Apologia* 26. *De Dato Patris Luminum* 2 (98).
57. *DVD* 23 (100).
58. Here I follow the Latin text of the Paris edition and add “*Si*” before “*verbum*”.
59. In the corresponding Latin sentence (35:5) I am reading “*quae*” in place of “*qui*”.

60. Nicholas's point here is that the human nature does not have its own separate person but has the same person as does the divine nature, in which it is subsumed.

61. Here, as elsewhere, Nicholas teaches that there is no comparative relation between the contracted (i.e., the restricted in some respect) and the Absolute. Contracted wisdom, for example, is wisdom in a certain degree; by contrast, Absolute Wisdom is not more or less wisdom but is Wisdom *per se*. Because the contracted is said by Nicholas to be infinitely distant from the Uncontracted, or Absolute, Nicholas at no time comes close to pantheism. Cf *DI* II, 2 (100:3-4); II, 9 (150:9-10). *DVD* 13 (57:17-20). *CA* I, 20 (83:18-19).

62. By "*magisterium*" Nicholas means the kind of knowledge that belongs to a magister, or teacher—viz., authoritative knowledge. This knowledge gives to the teacher a mastery of his subject-matter.

63. A union of grace is to be contrasted with a natural union.

64. *DI* III, 3 (202).

65. Nicholas here uses the word "hypostatic" in order to accentuate the previous word "personal". He does not intend to be making a distinction between two different significations.

66. *CA* III, 21 (237).

67. Nicholas speaks of the human intellectual nature rather than of the human rational nature, because he is tacitly distinguishing between intellect (*intellectus*) and reason (*ratio*), the former being a higher mental operation in which opposite concepts can be united. Indeed, in *De Coniecturis* Nicholas calls intellect, or understanding, the unity of reason. He does not, however, always use "*intellectus*" and "*ratio*" in such way as to distinguish between them. For a discussion of these usages see Hermann Schnarr's *Modi Essendi. Interpretationen zu den Schriften De docta ignorantia, De coniecturis und De venatione sapientiae von Nikolaus von Kues* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1973), pp. 45-48.

68. *CA* I, 16 (68:14).

69. "... and refuse to understand": i.e., they refuse to understand the true prophetic meaning.

70. That is, means Nicholas, the Jews will not be able to trouble the whole world by force of arms, as do the Turkish Muslims, who conquered Constantinople and other territories.

71. *CA* I, 19 (77:2 and 4) and accompanying notes.

72. *DI* II, 2 (104:13-20).

73. Regarding Nicholas's view of God as the End of all desire see *DVD* 16.

74. John 14:6.

75. Colossians 1:18-19.

76. "... can do this": i.e., can beget such a perfect son.

77. *DI* III, 6. In *CA* II, 13 Nicholas indicates that the Koran denies the death of Christ.

78. Philippians 3:7-8.

79. *DI* III, 7-8.

80. I Corinthians 15:53.

81. I Corinthians 15:20. Colossians 1: 18.

82. The Latin "*natura nostra*" here refers to Christ's human nature, in which the human nature of believers participates. Note *DI* III, 3 (198-199 and 202).

83. See *CA* II, 18 and II, 19 (154-155).
84. Nicholas's account of the Koran's meaning is an example of what, in *CA*, he calls *pia interpretatio*, i.e., devout interpretation. See the comments on this expression in the Introduction of the present book. Also see, below, n. 130 of Notes to the Translation of *Cribratio Alkorani*: Book Two.
85. Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima* X, 3 [f. 109<sup>r</sup>, column a, in *Avicenna Opera* (Venice, 1508); reprinted in Frankfurt, West Germany by Minerva Verlag, 1961].
86. *PF* 13 (43).
87. Romans 4:22.
88. Nicholas here refers to the fact that salvation comes through faith.
89. Hebrews 11:19.
90. See, below, n. 109 of Notes to the Translation of *Cribratio Alkorani*: Book One.
91. Hebrews 11:6.
92. "... formed faith ...": i.e., faith formed by love. Galatians 5:6. *DI* III, 11 (248:9-10).
93. James 2:17.
94. *DI* I, 1 (2:7). *De Mente* 4.
95. Romans 13:10.
96. See Nicholas's *De Filiatione Dei*.
97. Matthew 19:26.
98. Hebrews 1:2.
99. I John 3:2.
100. *DI* I, 3 (10:18-19).
101. In the corresponding sentence of the Latin text (viz., 66:9), I am reading "*regione*" in place of "*religione*". Cf. *PF* I (6:5 of the Latin text). Underlying Nicholas's discussion of the Eucharist is the controversy with the Church in Bohemia. See his *Epistolae contra Bohemos*.
102. "... the Prince of darkness ...": viz., Satan. See n. 15 above.
103. Cf. *PF* I (2:1), where Nicholas speaks of a certain man's having been caught up (i.e., raptured) unto an intellectual height. Nicholas does not consistently distinguish between the domain of reason (*ratio*) and the domain of the understanding (*intellectus*). See n. 67 above.