ties, and also by venturing into comparative theology. This paper will argue that both the medieval Riccoldo and the early modern Postel moved the Catholic Church one step closer to the official theology of Islam articulated in its 1965 Vatican II document, *Nostra Aetate*, and beyond.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Before discussing Riccoldo and Postel, two essential terms must be defined briefly: Christian theology of Islam and comparative theology. The Christian theology of Islam is a largely internal discussion drawing upon traditional sources like scripture and tradition (patristic and scholastic texts); it seeks to explain Islam systematically vis-à-vis Christianity. The Christian theology of Islam developed as a subset of the larger project of the Christian theology of religions, a discrete theological topic that has emerged in the years following Vatican II's *Nostra Aetate* (1965), a document which sets out the first official Catholic theology of religions.[6]

The Christian theology of religions project is not without its critics. In the late 1980s, Francis X. Clooney and James Fredericks, scholars of Hinduism and Buddhism respectively (and both Catholic priests) suggested a moratorium on the theology of religions, due to an inadequate knowledge of other religions among Christian theologians. Instead, they favoured a new method: comparative theology, which they have defined as "acts of faith seeking understanding which are rooted in a particular faith tradition but which ... venture into learning from other faith traditions. This learning is sought for the sake of fresh theological insights that are indebted to [both traditions]."[7] Clooney and Fredericks stress language learning and a close reading of scripture as key aspects of comparative theology.[8]

RICCOLDO DA MONTE DI CROCE

Elements of both the theology of religions and comparative theology can be found in the writings of Riccoldo da Monte di Croce. His magnum opus, *Contra legem Sarracenorum* (*c.* 1300), was read widely for centuries by both Western and Eastern

6 After the Catholic conciliar document *Nostra Aetate* was promulgated, other Christian denominations such as Anglicans and Methodists wrote authoritative statements on Islam. Examples of Christian theologies of Islam articulated by other denominations include the 1988 Lambeth Conference Resolution 21, 'Jews, Christians, and Muslims: The way of dialogue' (Anglican) and the 1992 resolution 'Our Muslim Neighbors' (Methodist).

7 Clooney 2010, p. 10.

8 Clooney 2010, pp. 57–68.

Christians, having been translated into Greek and back again into Latin, as well as into French, Italian, and other vernacular languages. Bibliander included a Latin version of *Contra legem* in his 1543 compendium, Martin Luther translated it into German, and Nicholas of Cusa praised it as a vital source in his *Cribratio Alcorani*. *Contra legem* thus served as a foundational resource for many later Christians writing on Islam—one could call it a crucial milestone along the historical trajectory of the Christian theology of Islam. Another book of Riccoldo's, *Liber peregrinationis*, while less popular than *Contra legem*, is still important for presaging key aspects of comparative theology, both in terms of method (emphasis on language and experience) and content (comparing similar doctrines such as monotheism, and similar practices such as prayer and study).[9]

One of the most distinctive aspects of Riccoldo's approach to Islam is his reliance on interreligious experience as authoritative. Interreligious experience regarding Islam can be defined as "firsthand observations of and personal interaction with Muslims."[10] It is the starting point for an inductive method of theologizing, which builds theory from there (this is the opposite of the more traditional deductive method, which begins with theory and then reads experience in light of that theory).[11] Only since the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) has the Catholic Church formally cited experience as an authoritative source of theology; today, experience is the methodological foundation for certain sub-disciplines, such as contextual theology.[12]

Riccoldo spends much time describing his personal observations of seven Muslim practices he calls *opera perfectionis* ("works of perfection"). He frequently uses the word *experientia* in these descriptions, making it a *de facto* authority for his theologizing about Islam.[13] For example, he uses the word *experientia* in the prologue of *Contra legem*, to highlight the fact that he studied the Qur'an and Arabic with Muslim scholars—an experience he says informed his conclusions about Islam:

9 Latin text (and French translation) of *Liber peregrinationis* is in *Pérégrination et Lettres* ed. Kappler 1997; English translation in George-Tvrtković 2012.

10 George-Tvrtković 2012, p. 108.

11 The inductive method is discussed by Dupuis 1997, p. 18: "We must insist on the role of dialogue as the necessary foundation of a theology of religions ... From a point of departure in the praxis of dialogue, the inductive operation is immediately immersed in the concrete religious experience of others." He adds that the theology of religions, like any theology, must guarantee the "obligatory encounter of Christian datum and experience", but especially requires a stress on interreligious experience "because of its frequent omission in the past and the need to reestablish a balance between the two sources."

12 George-Tvrtković 2012, pp. 111–113.

13 For specific references to the Latin word *experientia* in Riccoldo's works, see George-Tvrtković 2012, pp. 116–119.

> While [in Baghdad], I learned Arabic language and its literature at the same time. Reviewing their law most diligently and zealously in their schools, and conferring frequently with their masters, through this experience [*per experientiam*] I understood more and more the perversity of the aforementioned law.[14]

Some of Riccoldo's positive interreligious experiences were so shocking that he could not help but express praise for Islam. He repeatedly speaks of being "stupefied" and "amazed". These positive experiences of Muslims were so surprising because they did not align with the negative opinions Riccoldo had held about Islam before he arrived in Baghdad; thus, the *Liber peregrinationis* is full of contradictions. In one section he praises Muslim praxis (e.g., their devotion to study, prayer, almsgiving, reverence for the name of God), while in the section immediately after, he condemns the Qur'an as irrational, mendacious, lax and violent.[15]

The second distinctive aspect of Riccoldo's approach to Islam is his explicit reliance on Arabic as a theological authority. While a few others in the medieval Latin West drew upon on their own Arabic proficiency to argue against Islam (Petrus Alfonsi, William of Tripoli, Ramon Martí, Ramon Llull), Riccoldo boasts more frequently and more vehemently about his fluency than anyone else. And he was not alone in thinking that his Arabic mastery made his writings on Islam more authoritative. The author of Riccoldo's obituary in the necrology of his Florentine priory, Santa Maria Novella, highlights Riccoldo's Arabic skill, noting that his fluency enabled him to preach effectively to Baghdad's Muslims.[16] Nicholas of Cusa calls Riccoldo his "most pleasing" source of information on Islam, precisely because "he studied Arabic in Baghdad."[17] Could one call this emerging respect for Arabic *veritas Arabica*, parallel to the *veritas Hebraica* so beloved by Christian Hebraists like the Victorines? Riccoldo was one of the earliest and most explicit supporters of *veritas Arabica* in the medieval West, and Guillaume Postel, as professor of Arabic and contributor to the Bibliander project, helped to renew the idea in the 16th century.[18]

14 Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, *Contra legem Sarracenorum*, ed. in Mérigoux 1986, p. 62. The English translation is my own.

15 George-Tvrtković 2012, p. 129.

16 *Necrologio di S. Maria Novella*, ed. Orlandi 1955, p. 222.

17 Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alcorani*, ed. Hagemann 1986, pp. 23–24.

18 Thomas Burman discusses the respect certain medieval Latin Christians had for the Qur'an (and thus implicitly Arabic as well) in his book *Reading the Qur'ān in Latin Christendom* (2007).

Not only does Riccoldo's theological *method* foreshadow later approaches, but also the *content* of his writings. For example, he explicitly names monotheism as a doctrinal similarity between Islam and Christianity, something others before him such as Peter the Venerable also affirmed. But Riccoldo provides a more detailed picture of Islamic monotheism than Peter. In one discussion of the Trinity, Riccoldo begins by noting that Christians affirm the fundamental Islamic belief in the oneness of God (*tawhid*), or "no association":

> their Qur'an says about God "do not say three" (Qur'an 4:171), at once it gives the reason, "because God is the one and only." We do not say contrary, but we affirm with them that God is one, who is not only one, but the most simple. We give Him neither consort nor participant, just as they do not.[19]

What is striking about this discussion is that Riccoldo uses *Islamic* terms to describe *Christian* monotheism: "we give him neither consort nor participant". Like later comparative theologians, Riccoldo seems to have gained "fresh theological insights" from his careful study of Islam and its texts, and uses those insights to describe aspects of his own Christian doctrine. Of course, immediately following this discussion, he goes on to condemn Muslims for rejecting the Trinity.

Despite his positive description of Muslim praxis in *Liber peregrinationis*, the vast majority of Riccoldo's writings are focused on condemning the Qur'an. Although he does acknowledge once or twice the beauty of Qur'anic Arabic, he mainly repeats his six-part critique of the Muslim holy book as irrational, mendacious, violent, morally lax, confused and obscure. Is Riccoldo no different than other medieval Christian polemicists, then? If we look at *Contra legem* alone, we could easily conclude that his theology of Islam is mostly uncomplimentary. But if Riccoldo's writings of different genres are examined (*Liber peregrinationis*, an itinerarium; *Epistole ad ecclesiam triumphantem*, letters; and *Ad nationes orientales*, a missionary handbook), his theology becomes more complex, ambivalent, and even contradictory.[20] For when his works are read together, we see a theology of Islam that has room not only for praising Muslim works of perfection, but even for using Islam to critique Christianity (for example, in *Liber peregrinationis*, he says that Muslims are more forgiving than the Christians who

19 Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, *Contra legem*, ed. Mérigoux 1986, pp. 68–69.

20 The essay by Daniel Pachurka in this volume describes his recent discovery of a new, fifth text by Riccoldo, which I have not yet been able to consult.

pray the Our Father daily).[21] Criticizing one's own religion in light of another is another mark of comparative theology, and is rare among medieval Latin polemicists.[22]

GUILLAUME POSTEL

Fast forward to the 16th century, when Riccoldo was being read anew in Western Europe thanks to a retranslation of *Contra legem* into Latin by Picenus (1506) from an earlier Greek version by Cydones (*c.* 1350). This new Latin version (in which Picenus misnames him Richardus) was so valued by Martin Luther that he personally translated it into German (Luther follows Picenus, calling him "Bruder Richard").

Another reader of Riccoldo in the 16th century was the French Arabist Guillaume Postel.[23] Even though Postel has never been accepted as a mainstream theologian, then or now, he remains a crucial if understudied figure in the history of the Christian theology of Islam. Perhaps one could even say that he is a neglected link in the trajectory from Riccoldo, to Nicholas of Cusa, to Postel's student Bibliander, and then on to those who were influenced by Bibliander's 1543 compendium. Or perhaps Postel is a dead-end in the trajectory, whose methods were forgotten, only to be revived centuries later by theologians completely unaware of his precedent. After all, today Postel is known more by historians and linguists than by theologians. Yet theologians need to look at him anew, because his theology of Islam is ahead of its time: some of his methods were not employed, nor were many of his conclusions reached, by Christian scholars until the mid-20th century.

In this second part, I will discuss the following five aspects of Postel's theology of Islam, some of which are similar to Riccoldo's approach, and some of which push beyond him: 1. The use of Arabic as a theological authority; 2. The use of personal interreligious experience to explain Islamic praxis; 3. A singular focus on the Qur'an; 4. Affirmation of similarities; 5. Nascent comparative theological methods.

The first aspect of Postel's theology of Islam that is similar to Riccoldo's is that both cite their personal Arabic fluency as an authoritative source. Like Riccoldo, Postel also travelled to the Middle East, in 1534–1537 and 1549–1550. He already knew Greek, Spanish, Portuguese and Hebrew, and began studying Arabic in 1536 while in Constantinople. By 1538 he had published two seminal books: *Linguarum duodecim*, which describes twelve Middle Eastern and Balkan languages, including Arabic, and

21 English trans. in George-Tvrtković 2012, p. 215.

22 However, it was not uncommon for medieval Latins to hold up examples of pious Muslims as a way to shame their fellow Christians for bad behaviour.

23 The classic introduction to Guillaume Postel is still William Bouwsma, *Concordia Mundi: The Career and Thought of Guillaume Postel* (1957).

Grammatica Arabica, the first of its kind in Europe, and only surpassed by Erpenius in 1613. Also in 1538, he obtained his first academic position: a lectureship in philology and mathematics at the Collège de France. His students there included Bibliander, Joseph Scaliger, and Franciscus Raphelengius. For this and more, Postel has been called "father of Arabic studies in Europe".[24]

Postel is as proud of his Arabic fluency as Riccoldo. In the prefaces of both 1538 books, Postel makes the same boast nearly word for word: he says that while he was in Constantinople, it took him less than two years to master Arabic, a feat which so impressed his Turkish teachers that they called him a "demon". Postel basically says, "I'm not trying to brag", but then he goes on to brag: "if you already know Hebrew like I do, then Arabic is really easy." He continues to boast about his Arabic fluency in several later books, including a 1543 argument against Protestants and Muslims, and a 1560 history of the Turks.[25]

Postel is also similar to Riccoldo in sprinkling his writings with transliterations and translations of key Arabic terms. For example, he uses correct Arabic terms such as "Aiet" (*ayat*, Qur'anic verses), and also *Muslimun* (Muslims), the latter of which was rare at this time, since up to this point *Sarraceni* (Saracens) had been the common medieval Latin word for Muslims. He also includes Muslim sayings like *Alhamdulilah* (thanks be to God) as well as key Qur'anic phrases like *tzirat elmustequim* ("straight path" from sura 1:6), followed by a Latin explanation, "*id est punctum rectum*" for his Christian readers.[26]

However, Postel uses his Arabic to inform his theologizing in more diverse ways than Riccoldo. First, while Riccoldo only includes a few short lines from the Qur'an in his arguments against Islam, Postel frequently inserts long, verbatim quotations. Furthermore, Postel spills more ink simply quoting and explaining the Qur'an than he does arguing against it. In this, Postel is more like the Dominican William of Tripoli (d. *c.* 1276), who also includes long, verbatim quotations from the Qur'an—even in the middle of an argument against Islam (William prefers to quote from Qur'anic sections on Mary and Jesus). Second, Postel uses his Arabic skill not only to support his views of Islam, but also to support internal Christian theological arguments. One of the best examples of this can be found in the unpublished manuscript *Du souverain effect de la plus excellente Corone du mond*, where he cites the Jewish Kabbalah, Qur'an and *hadith* to support his argument for the Immaculate Conception of Mary, which

24 Toomer 1996, p. 26.

25 Guillaume Postel, *Alcorani seu legis Mahometi et Evangelistarum concordiae liber* (1543), pp. 6–7, and, by the same author, *Histoire Originale* (1560), pp. 4, 16.

26 Postel, *De orbis*, p. 158.

was being debated among Catholics at the time.[27] Postel's use of extra-Christian texts to support an internal Christian argument is rare, though not entirely unprecedented. Two similar cases in the later medieval period include Juan de Segovia (15th century), who enriched his discussion of the Immaculate Conception and Original Sin with references to Islamic texts, and Marquard de Lindau (14th century), who also argued for the Immaculate Conception by citing the Qur'an.[28] However, Marquard's argument came via secondary sources (Ramon Martí's *Pugio fidei* and Riccoldo's *Contra legem*), not directly from the Qur'an or *hadith*.[29] So while both Marquard and Postel used the same method of argumentation to support the Immaculate Conception, only Postel was proficient enough in Arabic to consult and cite Islamic sources for himself, and cite them directly in his argument.

The second aspect of Postel's theology of Islam that is similar to Riccoldo's is the use of personal interreligious experience to explain Muslim praxis. Postel spent less time in the Islamic world than Riccoldo did: Riccoldo lived for over a decade in Baghdad, while Postel spent roughly four years in the Islamic world, with time in Istanbul, Jerusalem, Syria and North Africa. Yet he still mimics Riccoldo's use of personal interreligious experience to augment his theologizing on Islam. For example, in *De orbis*, Postel interprets sura 1 of the Qur'an (known as "Al Fatiha", the Opening) within the context of Muslim prayer and theology, noting that this passage is the "common prayer of Muslims", and also mentioning the Islamic idea that the "whole of the Qur'an" is contained in Al Fatiha. Furthermore, he goes on to suggest that Al Fatiha is an Islamic prayer comparable to the Christian Our Father, since both are communal prayers said regularly by believers in each respective tradition.[30] To his section on Al Fatiha, Postel adds a description of the gestures and frequency of Muslim daily prayer, which he clearly gleaned from personal observation. Interestingly, while Riccoldo likewise describes Muslim prayer in his writings, he focuses almost entirely on *wudu* (ablutions before prayer), and also on peculiar Sufi prayer practices such as going into a trance or spinning around. But Riccoldo says nothing at all about Al Fatiha, which is prayed multiple times a day by all Muslims, nor does he describe the normal movements as-

27 Petry 2004, p. 105. "Du souverain effect de la plus excellente Corone du mond", Paris Bnf MS Fons Français 2114, Folio 61ff. According to Petry 2004, p. 106, MSS 2112–2116 contain (autograph) texts by Postel, including several about Mary. Postel's use of the Qur'an to defend Mary's immaculate conception and perpetual virginity can be found in MS 2114, folios 61ff. I have not yet consulted this manuscript.

28 For more on Segovia's use of the Qur'an in his Christian theological arguments, see Roth & Scotto 2015. See also Mann 2019. For Marquard, see Mossman 2007.

29 Mossman 2007, pp. 175–184, 197–198.

30 Postel, *De orbis*, pp. 157–158.

sociated with the five daily prayers. Instead, Riccoldo focuses on the more unusual aspects of Muslim prayer, while Postel describes more ordinary aspects.

The third aspect of Postel's theology of Islam that is similar to Riccoldo's is a singular focus on the Qur'an. Like Riccoldo, the Qur'an is central to Postel's discussion of Islam. His long summary of the Qur'an in *De orbis* takes up well over 50% of Book II (pp. 157–228). Mostly he abridges the suras; however, he translates nearly verbatim a few passages he deems important, for example the Annunciation story found in sura 19, Maryam. In toto, his presentation of the Qur'an contains roughly 30% verbatim quotes; the rest is paraphrase or commentary.

Like Riccoldo, Postel does not pay much attention to Islamic scholarly apparatus.[31] Both of them focus their analysis squarely on the Qur'an. But unlike Riccoldo, Postel gives his audience more access to the text. He includes long, verbatim quotes from the Qur'an to enable his readers to consider the text on their own, while Riccoldo only includes short quotes, to support his anti-Islamic arguments. Riccoldo rarely includes long passages. Furthermore, Postel's overall tone is more positive, and thus more in line with Nicholas of Cusa and William of Tripoli, both of whom had a more sympathetic reading of the Qur'an than Riccoldo.[32] Postel, William, and Nicholas all focus their efforts on Qur'anic themes which seem parallel to biblical ones, while Riccoldo simply repeats his same six arguments against the Qur'an. Riccoldo concludes that the Qur'an is irrational, while Postel's assumption is that it is rational, and thus worthy of careful study.

The fourth aspect of Postel's theology of Islam that is similar to Riccoldo's is his affirmation of some similarities between Christianity and Islam. Both focus on the doctrine of God. However, Riccoldo is brief and mentions only monotheism, while Postel writes a more extensive account, and focuses not only on monotheism, but also lists several divine attributes: "It is taught by this law [Qur'an] that: God is one, cares, provides, and nourishes all, exacts punishment on the wicked, rewards the good, will judge all humans in the future, resurrection, and very similar precepts from the Old Testament and New Testament can be pulled out."[33] With the line "very similar precepts", Postel explicitly notes the similarities between the Qur'anic and biblical doctrine of God. Furthermore, the Islamic doctrine of God which he outlines here is strikingly parallel to that found in the 1965 Catholic conciliar document *Nostra Aetate*: "[Muslims] adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful,

31 Thomas Burman argues that many medieval Latin Christians, even those with knowledge of Arabic like Riccoldo, read the Qur'an in isolation. See Burman 2015.

32 For a discussion of Nicholas of Cusa's interpretive approach to the Qur'an, dubbed *pia interpretatio*, see Hopkins 1994. For a discussion of William, see George-Tvrtković 2016.

33 Postel, *De orbis*, pp. 142–143.

the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; ... they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead."[34] Postel is clearly a forerunner to *Nostra Aetate*, although it is doubtful its framers knew of his writings.

Why does Postel focus on divine attributes? Like Riccoldo, Postel sees monotheism as a commonality between Islam and Christianity. But Riccoldo does not want to find too many commonalities, since that would take away from his anti-Islamic argument. But Postel *does* hope to find commonalities, since one goal of his book *De orbis* was to unite the whole world under a single universal religion. Perhaps not unlike Nicholas of Cusa's plan in *De pace fidei* (1453), Postel hoped to come up with a list of "lowest common denominators" which could possibly be shared by people of all religions. Therefore, Postel does not stop with the Islamic doctrine of God. He also highlights common scriptural figures such as Abraham and Mary. For example, in his summary of the Qur'an in Book II of *De orbis*, Postel translates several Marian passages in their entirety, including the Annunciation stories found in suras 3 and 19.[35] This is unlike Riccoldo, who refuses to see Mary as a commonality, and in fact is critical of the Qur'anic Mary (he claims that the Qur'an confuses Mary the mother of Jesus and Miriam the sister of Moses). In regard to Mary, Postel is more like William of Tripoli and Nicholas of Cusa, both of whom also quote verbatim Qur'anic passages on Mary, and praise Qur'anic mariology for its similarity to the gospels.[36]

The fifth aspect of Postel's approach to Islam that is similar to Riccoldo's is that both employ comparative theological methods *avant la lettre*. As already noted above, in *De orbis* Part II, Postel includes a lengthy, non-polemical discussion of sura 1 ("Al Fatiha"), a key Qur'anic passage and central prayer in Islam. Not only does Postel translate every single verse of sura 1, but he also includes his own commentary, devoting a half page to discuss just seven verses, which is more than he does for any other part of the Qur'an. As noted above, his commentary includes discussion of how Al Fatiha is used in Muslim prayer. But he also compares the Al Fatiha and Our Father prayers in another, more surprising place: his *Grammatica Arabica*. Throughout the grammar, Postel often selects religious texts as the basis of student exercises: e.g., he translates the Our Father into Arabic, and follows this with the Latin. Postel continues with a translation of the Al Fatiha into Latin, followed by the Arabic. Both prayers, both languages. Of course, this technique is helpful to his Christian students because they know the Our Father

34 Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate*, section 3.

35 Postel, *De orbis*, pp. 174–177 (sura 3), pp. 204–205 (sura 19). He also comments further on these verses later in Book II, for example on pp. 252, 254–255.

36 See George-Tvrtković 2016 .

well. But why does Postel choose to pair the Our Father with Al Fatiha? Linguistically they don't go together (plus his students would not have known Al Fatiha), but theologically they do. The two prayers are in fact comparable in many ways; they are both among the most oft-recited prayers, respectively, in both religions; they are both scriptural; they both present a similar doctrine of God. Thus in the middle of a grammar, a non-theological genre, Postel seems to employ another method of comparative theologians, who intentionally read texts of different religions together—in the original languages—in order to gain insight into their own tradition. Postel is one of the first Latin Europeans who is actually able to do this—juxtapose the Latin Bible and Arabic Qur'an. By performing theology in the middle of a grammar, he seems to presage the comparative method, without articulating it as such. Later, he appears more conscious of his comparisons. For example, in *De orbis*, Postel actually uses the word *comparata* when describing Christ and Mary in the Bible and Qur'an. Perhaps by 1544 he had become more intentional in his comparative theology, six years after the 1538 grammar.[37]

CONCLUSION

Riccoldo and Postel are most directly and explicitly connected by their skill in Arabic. Indeed, this is precisely why Postel names Riccoldo as a worthy predecessor in *De orbis*. But Riccoldo and Postel are alike in other ways, including using personal interreligious experience to explain Muslim praxis, outlining similarities between Christian and Islamic doctrines of God, and bringing creative theologizing into non-traditional genres. Like Riccoldo, whose theology of Islam appears not only in a traditional polemical text, but also in a pilgrimage itinerary, letters, and a missionary manual, Postel's theology of Islam can likewise be found in books of distinct genres. In fact, Postel never wrote a traditional polemic against Islam. Instead, he inserted his Qur'anic commentary into the middle of *De orbis*, a book about world religious harmony, not Islam. And his Arabic grammar's chrestomathy (language exercises) featured two popular prayers, Al Fatiha and Our Father.[38] Ostensibly, this juxtaposition was simply meant to help students practise Arabic using familiar texts. But was he not also presaging the comparative theological method? Why was Postel's theology of Islam articulated in such unusual genres? Perhaps it was because in the 16th century, there was not yet anywhere to put the kind of theology he was writing.

One last observation. Although Riccoldo and Postel both wrote theologies of Islam, neither were traditional theologians. Rather, they were unique for their dual iden-

37 Postel, *De orbis*, p. 155.

38 For more on chrestomathy, see, Hamilton 2017.

tities as both vowed religious and scholars of Islam and Arabic. This special skill set is useful when constructing a sound Christian theology of Islam. And as Postel notes in *De orbis*, few are up to the task, then or now. Postel and Riccoldo are members of an exclusive club of Catholic theologians in history who also happen to be experts in other religions and their respective languages: Hebraists like Andrew of St Victor (d. 1175) and Nicholas of Lyra (d. 1349), Buddhologists like Ippolito Desideri, SJ (d. 1733), Indologists like Sister Sara Grant, RSCJ (d. 2002), and Islamologists like Louis Massignon (d. 1962). Due to their unique skill set and identity, Riccoldo and Postel should be counted as important milestones along the historical trajectory of the Christian theology of Islam. For in their work we can see germs of the official view of Islam articulated by the Catholic church centuries later in its 1965 Vatican II document, *Nostra Aetate*, a text written by men similar to Riccoldo and Postel: religious order priests who were also scholars of Islam, such as Georges Anawati, a Dominican, and Robert Caspar, a White Father. All are outliers, rare birds who dwell in the borderlands, betwixt and between. These unique scholar theologians—the kind that Riccoldo da Monte di Croce and Guillaume Postel both were—are among the few who are qualified to articulate a robust Christian theology of Islam, and push its development forward.

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THE DISSEMINATION