

Review Article

Christopher Schabel (ed.), *The Theological Quodlibeta in the Middle Ages*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006-2007. Vol. 1: *The Thirteenth Century*, xiii + 563 pp.; vol. 2: *The Fourteenth Century*, xiv + 791 pp. (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, vols. 1 and 7.) Price € 125 each. ISBN: 978 90 04 12333 5 (vol. 1) and 978 90 04 16288 4 (vol. 2).

In a survey article in the *Lexikon des Mittelalters* on philosophical and theological disputations, Ludwig Hödl remarks that “the academic and textual development of the disputation de quolibet in the 13th and 14th century... is not yet fully elucidated” (vol. 3: 1117). One may doubt that it ever will be, but the two volumes edited by Chris Schabel constitute a colossal contribution towards the attainment of this goal, and they are destined to become an indispensable tool for future research. Due to the particular nature of quodlibetal disputations—anyone in the audience was allowed to raise questions about any imaginable topic (*a quolibet* and *de quolibet*)—they provide unique insight into the issues of current interest during the century between their appearance and the end of written records, that is, roughly 1230-1330.

Schabel's two volumes are the most extensive single work on theological quodlibets since Palémon Glorieux pioneered research with his two volumes on this hitherto neglected literary genre (1925 and 1935). Schabel describes the objective of his volumes as threefold: “to provide a convenient and stimulating guide to the quodlibetal writings of theologians in a format different from that chosen by Glorieux; to update and correct Glorieux; to encourage further research on and publications of these texts” (vol. 2: 13). Twenty-five scholars of medieval theology, philosophy, history, and economics contribute to the success of the editor's goal. In twenty-eight chapters they not only review the state of the research, but they also press on to new territory by offering surveys of doctrine, by clarifying the textual history of printed and unprinted quodlibets, and by composing critical editions of some quodlibetal questions.

A numbered list of the chapters will facilitate reference to them (some titles are abbreviated): *Volume 1*: (1) Jacqueline Hamesse, “Theological Quaestiones Quodlibetales”; (2) Kevin White, “Thomas Aquinas”; (3) Girard Etzkorn, “Franciscan Quodlibeta 1270-1285”; (4) Hans Kraml, “William de la Mare”; (5) Pasquale Porro, “Henry of Ghent”; (6) Giorgio Pini, “Giles of Rome”; (7) John Wippel, “Godfrey of Fontaines”; (8) Elsa Marmursztejn, “A Normative Power in the Making”; (9) Sylvain Piron, “Franciscan Quodlibeta 1280-1300”; (10) Roberto Lambertini, “Political Quodlibeta”; (11) Giovanni Ceccarelli, “Economic Thought in Quodlibeta”; (12) Jean-Luc Solère, “Was the Eye in the Tomb?” *Volume 2*: (13) Martin Pickavé, “The Principle of Individuation in Quodlibeta”; (14) Chris Schabel, “Peter of Auvergne”; (15) Timothy Noone and Francie Roberts, “John Duns Scotus”; (16) Ludwig Hödl, “John of Pouilly”; (17) Cecilia Trifogli, “Thomas Wylton”; (18) Lauge Nielsen, “Peter Auriol”; (19) Sylvain Piron, “Nicholas of Bar's Collection”; (20) William Courtenay, “Reflections on Vat. lat. 1086 and Prosper of Reggio Emilia”; (21) Thomas Sullivan, “Canons Regular and the Monks”; (22) Russell Friedman, “Dominican Quodlibetal Literature, ca. 1260-1330”; (23) Chris Schabel, “Carmelite Quodlibeta”;

(24) Chris Schabel and William Courtenay, "Augustinian Quodlibeta after Giles of Rome"; (25) William Duba, "Continental Franciscan Quodlibeta after Scotus"; (26) Rondo Keele, "Oxford Quodlibeta from Ockham to Holcot"; (27) William Courtenay, "The Demise of Quodlibetal Literature"; (28) Richard Cross, "Natural Philosophy: An Analytic Index."

In what follows, I will outline the achievements of the chapters under six headings: (1) the characteristics of quodlibetal disputations; (2) doctrine; (3) the masters' self-awareness; (4) survey chapters on groups of religious; (5) textual history and (future) editions; (6) question lists and indices. Chapters on single authors will be taken into account in the section on doctrine and to some degree in other sections.

The Characteristics of Quodlibetal Disputations

Jacqueline Hamesse offers an introduction into the literary genre of theological quodlibets (chapter 1). Quodlibetal disputations arose out of the *quaestio disputata* in the 1230s, at first apparently in the study houses of the mendicant orders and soon afterwards in the University of Paris. The University would suspend courses twice a year during Lent and Advent to make room for the solemn public quodlibetal disputations. Only masters who desired to do so actively participated, assisted by a bachelor who would give the initial response to the arguments of the opponent. The oral disputation took place in two stages: during the first session, questions were asked in random order, and for each question, arguments *pro* and *contra* were advanced. A few days later, during a second oral session, the master reorganized the questions according to a logical scheme and answered each question (*determinatio*). In many cases, during the months following the disputation, the master would revise his notes for publication (*ordinatio*). The written records preserved in the manuscripts may either be the *ordinatio* or notes (*reportationes*) from the first or second session. By the 1270s, quodlibetal disputations spread from the Paris Faculty of Theology to Oxford and to the Papal Curia as well as to the Paris Faculty of Arts.

Throughout the book, we learn more about general features of the oral and written quodlibets. In several instances the master may have suggested beforehand that he be asked specific questions. There are also some cases of quodlibetal determinations by bachelors outside the University of Paris (prominent examples are the first Quodlibet of Giles of Rome and the Quodlibets of Peter John Olivi). Pasquale Porro emphasizes that quodlibets allow the master a more personal style than other literary genres and gives the example of Henry of Ghent witnessing publicly of having been pressured by the Papal legate, the bishop, his destined successor, and the university chancellor to take a position against the unicity of substantial forms (vol. 1: 199-200). Quodlibets are in general the literary genre most suited for questions about current issues, be they historical events such as the fall of Acre in the Holy Land, or new forms of economic practice such as perpetual annuities of the Beguines.

The studies contained in this book disprove some general suppositions of Glorieux. *Pace* Glorieux, we are given examples of quodlibets that were held outside the Universities of Paris and Oxford, determined by masters who were not actually regent, and even by those who had advanced to major administrative positions such as minister general of a religious order.

The sudden cessation of written records of quodlibets is a puzzle that is addressed repeatedly, most systematically by Hamesse and Courtenay (chapters 1 and 28). Hamesse points to the disapproval of quodlibetal disputations by Pope John XXII as well as disenchantment on the part of the masters themselves due to the nature of some questions asked. Courtenay underscores that

while written records diminish abruptly in the 1330s, the oral sessions continue to be practiced. Some masters elaborated their quodlibetal disputations into separate treatises or included such material in their *Sentences* commentaries. Keele points out that some quodlibets were so linked to the local debates that they were difficult to understand in isolation from this context (vol. 2: 692).

Doctrine

In their heyday, quodlibetal disputations offered the occasion for students to ask their master to deepen or to clarify material from the classes they attended, for colleagues to press their adversaries on hotly debated issues, and for the broader audience to raise questions about practical matters or ethical dilemmas of any sort. From the vast range of topics contained in theological quodlibets—reaching far beyond the boundaries of theology—numerous topics are discussed at some point or another in Schabel's volumes. In what follows I will provide examples from different fields of inquiry.

Theology / philosophical anthropology: Aquinas's position on the identity of Christ's body during the *triduum*, that is, the time after his death and before his resurrection, is the main object of chapter 12 by Jean-Luc Solère. Aquinas was asked in three subsequent quodlibetal disputations to clarify how he can account for the generally accepted idea that the hypostatic union (the union between the humanity and divinity in the single person of Christ) continued during the *triduum* with Christ's soul *and* body, when in fact in his view the dead body is no longer substantially and numerically the same as the living body. The proponents of a plurality of forms in a human individual argued that Christ's divinity continued to be united to the form of corporeity which remained intact after death. In the quodlibetal disputations, Aquinas's adversaries tried to force him to admit that his denial of any additional substantial forms in a human being apart from the soul implies unacceptable absurdities. Aquinas answered that in the case of Christ, identity has a different basis than in other human beings. The dead body of Christ has the same being (*esse*) as the living one, because its identity is rooted in the union with the second person of the Trinity, rather than in the union with the soul. Yet the dead body is "body" only in an equivocal sense, when compared to the living body.

Theology of creation / metaphysics: A topic frequently discussed in the volume is the eternity of the world (see chapters 3, 4, 15, and 16). For example, William de la Mare is asked whether God knows the first moment in which he could have created the universe. William denies that an actually infinite time is possible; nevertheless there is no first moment before which the world could not have been created, for God could have chosen any moment before the one he actually chose. Since no such first moment exists, God does not know it (chapter 4).

Metaphysics: Martin Pickavé examines discussions of the principle of individuation in printed quodlibets from 1277 to about 1320 (chapter 13). In addition to the doctrinal interest of such a diachronic study, this chapter constitutes also a case study of how fruitful a methodical exploration of quodlibets belonging to a larger span of time can be. Recurring issues are the principle of individuation for immaterial substances, the role of accidents in individuation, and the distinction between an external and an internal principle of individuation. The almost seamless study of quodlibetal questions on individuation brings to light that despite the originality of Scotus's solution, his critique of previous accounts was highly indebted to earlier authors. Also Ockham is not as innovative as one may think: his view that beings are individuated by themselves rather

than by an added entity is found before in Roger Marston and John of Naples. Pickavé shows that there were two main conceptions of individuation current among the medieval thinkers: in the strict sense as limitation and contraction of common forms or essences; in the broad sense as what accounts for the individuality of individuals.

Logic / metaphysics: Less famous than Ockham's razor is Chatton's "anti-razor," or the "Chatton Principle," discussed by Rondo Keele (chapter 26). For Chatton, one must posit as many entities as are required to make a proposition true. This implies that the transition from a given state to the contradictory state involves the generation or corruption of some thing (*res*). Accordingly, Chatton posited respective accidents, such as production, and successive accidents, such as motion. For Ockham, conversely, motion is simply a connotative term, primarily signifying a moving object and secondarily signifying that it successively exists in different places. To refute Chatton, Ockham gives an example in which there is a real difference without a change in entities involved: a moment after an angel is created, the proposition "an angel is being created" is false, although the same entities are involved (namely, God and the angel).

Moral psychology: One of the most hotly debated topics in the quodlibets is freedom and its foundation in intellect and will. A diachronic study on freedom like Pickavé's on individuation would be fascinating, although hardly suited for a book like Schabel's because it could easily grow into a sizable monograph on its own. Yet some accounts of freedom are discussed in the volume, even if briefly, such as Giles of Rome's (Giorgio Pini in chapter 6) and John of Pouilly's (Ludwig Hödl in chapter 16). A central issue in these discussions is the question of whether volitional defects are traceable to cognitive defects. A key text on freedom by Duns Scotus is edited in chapter 15 by Timothy Noone and Francie Roberts.

Ethics: Godfrey of Fontaines' *Quodlibet* XIV contains a lengthy discussion of the virtue of justice, the object of chapter 7 by John Wippel. Godfrey argues that justice is a general virtue distinct from the other moral virtues, and that apart from charity (a supernatural virtue) and prudence (an intellectual virtue), justice is the only general virtue, indeed the only general natural moral virtue. Against James of Viterbo, for whom friendship is a general moral virtue, Godfrey argues on Aristotelian grounds that friendship is a particular moral virtue. As a moral virtue, justice resides in the sense appetite, and as a general virtue, justice has the common good as its principal object and end.

Politics: Throughout the book there are discussions of political thought—especially Church politics—and in addition, an entire chapter is dedicated to this topic (chapter 10 by Roberto Lambertini). An issue of Church politics recurrent in the book is the debate about mendicant privileges (discussed especially in chapters 8, 10, and 16). What started out as a debate about the right of mendicants to hear confessions (a privilege granted by the Pope) soon evolved into a controversy over the nature and limits of papal power in the Church, and more deeply about rival ecclesiologies: Who receives power directly from Christ—the pope alone, or also the bishops and prelates? Medieval masters also discussed secular forms of government, such as the advantages of elective over hereditary monarchy (chapter 10).

Economy: Chapter 11 by Giovanni Ceccarelli is on economic topics: usury, rent contracts, fair trade and fair price, life annuities, etc. Questions about economic issues were particularly frequent in those quodlibetal disputations that were held in the economically dynamic cities of southern France and of Italy (see also chapter 9). One can observe in the debates a trend in economic thought that prepared modern financial systems. While the masters provided numerous accounts of the immorality of usury, they also discussed cases in which taking monetary

compensation for a loan does not fall under usury, and some critiqued the Aristotelian theory of the sterility of money, on which an important argument against usury was based.

Some quodlibetal questions are rather strange: “Does a wife whose husband died and comes back to life have a greater marital obligation to this man than to another?”; “How should a monster be baptized that is born with two heads?” etc. As Solère shows, questions like these are not about casuistry or sacramental practice, but rather bear on the philosophical problem of personal identity.

The Self-Awareness of the Masters

Some quodlibetal questions are self-referential in that they reveal the masters’ self-awareness as teachers of theology. For example, Aquinas is asked whether someone who can devote himself to care of souls sins if he gives his time to study. For Aquinas, teachers of theology are builders of a spiritual edifice; they are architects who investigate how to care for salvation of souls and teach others to do so. Thus, apart from situations of imminent necessity, teachers should rather teach sacred doctrine than give individual care to the salvation of souls. Likewise, Aquinas’s determinations about the use of rational arguments versus arguments from authority incidentally inform us about his own method of inquiry (Kevin White, chapter 2).

Elsa Marmursztejn investigates systematically the quodlibetal questions that reflect the masters’ self-consciousness, arguing that the quodlibets were a sort of “mirror of the doctors” in analogy to the *specula principum* (chapter 8). The masters not only considered themselves exclusively suited to train the higher clergy, but they also laid claim to the competence to evaluate the doctrinal power of the clergy. Henry of Ghent, for instance, denouncing unconditional obedience, argued that it is “absolutely licit and extremely advantageous” to dispute the power of prelates. In particular in the aftermath of the Condemnations of 1277 by bishop Étienne Tempier, academic freedom became a burning issue. Godfrey of Fontaines argued that the intellectual climate after 1277 no longer encouraged the search for truth, but rather fostered an atmosphere of suspicion and fear of excommunication. He called for pressure on the bishop to revoke the Condemnations.

An example of the cautionary attitude after 1277 is found in the first two University Quodlibets of Giles of Rome. In his second Quodlibet, Giles addresses a number of condemned articles directly (chapter 6). Numerous explicit references to condemned articles are also made by Henry of Ghent (chapter 5, with a list on p. 207). The 1277 Condemnations still provide the background to John of Pouilly’s discussions of human freedom, although John witnesses to the fact that the theologians were increasingly freeing themselves from the restrictions imposed by the Condemnations (chapter 16).

Groups of Religious

This book’s collective effort to advance our knowledge of historical and textual issues concerning quodlibets is gigantic. Although most of this kind of scholarship is presented in volume 2, the contributions of the first volume are likewise the fruit of great learning and careful examination. The chapters on single authors appear to be based on a comprehensive (or almost comprehensive) reading of the quodlibets, something which is quite impressive when treating prolific quodlibet authors like Thomas Aquinas, Giles of Rome and even more so Henry of Ghent. John Wippel focuses mainly on a single quodlibetal disputation in order to ponder evidence in favor of or against

its characterization as a quodlibet, settling in the end in its favor (chapter 7). The chapters of the second volume are largely based on unpublished material, constituting pioneer work of highest rank.

From the rich material contained in these chapters I can only provide some highlights. This section will briefly discuss the surveys of the quodlibetal literature of the various groups of religious. The next section will review the chapters that explore unpublished material with an eye to future complete critical editions. Many details will have to remain unmentioned, such as efforts to clarify matters of dating.

Groups of Franciscans are discussed in chapters 3, 9, and 25. In particular, chapter 25 by William Duba, covering all known Franciscan authors of quodlibets after Scotus, is a tremendous fount of information. For each of these authors, Duba gives biographical information, a treatment of the quodlibets and textual problems, and a question list. The quodlibets of three Franciscans are discussed *in extenso*: those of Francis of Marchia, of Francis of Meyronnes, and of Gerard Odonis, whose Quodlibet is the last written record of Franciscan quodlibetal disputations held on the Continent that is extant. Gerard's Quodlibet, controversial for defending a position on the beatific vision associated with the view of Pope John XXII, survives in a single question and in a single manuscript. The appendix to the chapter discusses an important codex for the study of medieval Scotism.

Russell Friedman performs an analogous service for Dominican quodlibets and *impugnations* of quodlibets ("anti-quodlibets"), covering the entire period of Dominican quodlibetal writings after Aquinas (chapter 22). Friedman provides the *status quaestionis* on the Dominican quodlibetal literature and discusses what light they shed on quodlibetal disputations more generally. Numerous authors are discussed; Hervaeus Natalis's collection of quodlibets gets the most detailed attention because of its size and its wide distribution. Friedman concludes that "Dominican quodlibetal literature reflects in full the dynamic, evolving, and creative nature of early Thomism" (vol. 2: 475). In the appendix, Friedman transcribes Bernard of Auvergne's *impugnations* of Henry of Ghent's *Quodlibet* 5.9 and 6.1, as well as Robert of Orford's anti-quodlibet against Henry's *Quodlibet* 5.9.

The Carmelites were a very prolific religious order, although their activity in Paris started rather late, with Gerard of Bologna as their first master of theology in 1295. Building upon scholarship by the Catalan writer Bartomeu Xibertà, Chris Schabel not only makes Xibertà's research known to the English-speaking community, but also corrects and supplements his discoveries concerning attribution, dating, manuscripts, nature and reception of Carmelite quodlibets (chapter 23). Numerous writers are discussed, with special emphasis on Gerard of Bologna, Guy Terrena, and John Baconthorpe. The interest of studying early fourteenth-century Carmelites lies in the fact that "loyal to neither Scotus nor Aquinas, they are 'impartial' and independent contemporary participants in discussions of topics on which, with notable exceptions, the lines had already been drawn between Franciscans and Dominicans" (vol. 2: 539). In the appendix, Schabel reconstructs Baconthorpe's *Quodlibet* 1.10-12, where the early modern editions show some irregularities. He also transcribes *Quodlibet* q. 15 of Peter Swainington: "An angelus cognoscat certitudinaliter futura contingentia?"

Similar in structure but much shorter is the subsequent chapter by Schabel and William Courtenay on Augustinians after Giles of Rome. It is here that James of Viterbo's popular four quodlibets are discussed.

Another tremendous work of scholarship is Thomas Sullivan's contribution on Canon Regulars and Monks (chapter 21). Most authors are discussed in lexicographic style, but the Canon Regular Servais of Guez or Servais de Mont-Saint-Éloi (who figures also prominently in chapters 8,

11 and 19), the Benedictine Pierre Roger (the future Pope Clement VI), and the Cistercian James of Thérines are treated in some detail, providing a précis of some of the themes they discussed.

Textual History and (Future) Editions

Schabel's two volumes will be a mandatory handbook for future editors of quodlibets. It contains the current state of research on manuscript evidence and dating, and it goes beyond a mere survey of existing scholarship.

Chris Schabel's chapter 14 on Peter of Auvergne's six Quodlibets is based on a complete reading of all 108 questions and an inspection of its nineteen known medieval manuscripts. The chapter contains a list of all explicit citations by Peter, a list of all medieval manuscripts, an analysis of the apparatus criticus of each of the existing editions employing multiple manuscripts, a brief assessment of each manuscript, a question list, and an edition of *Quodlibet* 1.1, "Utrum Deus sit infinitae virtutis in vigore."

In preparation of a complete edition of Duns Scotus's Quodlibet, Timothy Noone and Francie Roberts examined 42 of the 63 known manuscripts that contain the work. In chapter 15 they discuss its complex manuscript tradition and edit its question 16 (on the compatibility of freedom of will and natural necessity) by collating ten manuscripts in their entirety. They also provide quantitative and qualitative patterns for each of the ten manuscripts employed, as well as a tentative stemma.

Chapter 17 by Cecilia Trifogli consists of a systematic collection of the results of previous studies on Thomas Wylton's single Quodlibet. Eighteen questions are contained in the single manuscript plus fragments, but five more questions were recently discovered by Stephen Dumont. For each of the eighteen questions, Trifogli lists the manuscripts that contain them, mentions editions whenever they exist, provides a bibliography, and refers to related questions in other works. She also summarizes each question. She adds an edition of question 11 (on the act of the beatific vision) and question 12 (on the multiplicity of really distinct perfections in God).

Several manuscripts and an early modern printed edition contain Peter Auriol's Quodlibet or parts thereof. In chapter 18, Lauge Nielsen lists its prologue and sixteen questions, providing references to the manuscripts that contain them. He edits question 7 (on the soul as form of the body), which the early modern edition did not print in its entirety, as well as Guy Terrena's *Quodlibet* 5.14, in which Auriol's philosophical anthropology is attacked.

The next two chapters are each dedicated to a single manuscript. The topic of Chapter 19 by Sylvain Piron is a manuscript that belonged to Nicholas of Bar-le-Duc, containing a collection of 170 quodlibetal questions by eighteen authors, almost exclusively concerned with practical moral cases. One of Piron's contributions in the chapter is his attempt to identify the authors' names not given in full by the manuscript. Chapter 20 by William Courtenay discusses a manuscript containing material and information from theologians active in Paris in the 1310s. It includes Prosper of Reggio Emilia's *Sentences* commentary as well as his "notebook" that contains many personal *reportationes* of quodlibetal questions. Courtenay considers in some detail the dating and context of the *Sentences* commentary, in preparation for which Prosper seems to have assembled the "notebook." Courtenay includes a table of authors cited in the *Sentences* commentary and in the "notebook" and attempts to identify some abbreviated names.

Question Lists and Indices

Numerous chapters contain question lists that are corrections of Glorieux's lists or that Glorieux did not include in his volumes. In addition, the book contains four indices: an index of ancient and medieval names (vol. 1), an index of main treatments of quodlibetal authors, a long index of manuscripts, and an index of names (ancient, medieval, and contemporary) and locations (vol. 2). Schabel decided not to include a bibliography of primary sources and refers instead to a tremendously useful website by Sylvain Piron et al., www.quodlibase.org.

One index deserves special attention. Richard Cross provides a lengthy analytical index to the abundant quodlibetal questions on natural philosophy (chapter 28). Since natural philosophy in the Middle Ages is inseparable from theological issues such as transubstantiation, the location of angels, the Immaculate Conception and so on, Cross includes not only questions that ask explicitly about matters of natural philosophy, but also theological questions that involve issues in natural philosophy. The index is organized by major headings and subheadings. For instance, under the general heading "Self-motion" one finds four more specific headings, including "Will as self-mover," containing seven questions. Besides being a useful research instrument, the index is itself a witness to the breadth and depth of medieval quodlibets.

Appraisal

The two copious volumes on theological quodlibets are the outstanding result of teamwork and of careful work by the editor. As Schabel remarks in the preface, "some chapters required an extraordinary amount of work and could easily have been developed into small books" (vol. 1: vii). Despite a great variety of approaches by the authors, the book has an overall unity. The topics are thoughtfully chosen and attuned to one another; there are numerous cross-references among the chapters. The book not only surveys the state of the question on quodlibetal literature, but it greatly advances research and lays the basis for future studies and editions, at times even giving concrete suggestions for future research possibilities.

Like Glorieux, Schabel did not seek pure perfection, for otherwise a work of these dimensions would have never seen the light of day. For example, though he initially envisaged a chapter on Gerard of Abbeville, a contemporary and adversary of Thomas Aquinas and the author of twenty rather short quodlibets, he was unable to get an original piece by the expert on Gerard, Adriaan Pattin. This lacuna is partly compensated by the fact that Gerard is repeatedly discussed in other chapters.

We are in great debt to Chris Schabel and his contributors for having assembled such a highly informative and useful work. The book sets the standard for analogous works on different literary genres that are still major desiderata.

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