



John^o Duns Scotus

GOD AND CREATURES

The Quodlibetal Questions

*Translated with an Introduction, Notes,
and Glossary by*

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PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

1975

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Introduction

John Duns Scotus, known as the Subtle Doctor, was a scholastic theologian and philosopher who for four centuries or more after his death had a profound influence on Western philosophical thought. The American scientist and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce considered him the greatest speculative mind of the Middle Ages and one of the "profoundest metaphysicians that ever lived."¹ Though Scotus' Latin has neither the simplicity of St. Thomas' nor the beauty of St. Bonaventure's, one seventeenth-century theologian writing about his moral philosophy declares the Scotist school to be more numerous than that of all the others combined.² Two international congresses devoted to his thought within the last decade bear witness to the continuing interest in his ideas.³ Yet as his sobriquet suggests, he is a deep and difficult thinker. Almost invariably his thought develops through an involved dialogue with unnamed contemporaries that taxes the patience of most readers. As one philosopher puts it, his way of writing is "exploratory rather than finished, intended to record Duns Scotus' thought for himself, rather than communicate it to less thorough and critical minds."⁴ Yet de-

¹ *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), Vol. 1, p. 10, par. 1.29: "Duns Scotus and William Ockham are decidedly the greatest speculative minds of the Middle Ages as well as two of the profoundest metaphysicians that ever lived." Of the two, it is clear Peirce regarded Scotus as the superior. See, e.g., pars. 1.6, 1.16, 1.19f.

² See the testimony, for instance, of the seventeenth-century Cistercian theologian, John Caramuel y Lobkowitz. In this connection see F. Bąk, "Scoti Schola Numerosior Est Omnibus Aliis Simul Sumptis," *Franciscan Studies* xvi (1956), 144-65.

³ The proceedings are published in the first five volumes of a new series entitled *Studia scholastica-scotistica*. Those of the Second International Scotistic Congress held at Oxford and Edinburgh, Sept. 11-17, 1966, appear in first four volumes under the title *De doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti* (Romae, 1968); those of the Third International Scotistic Congress held at Vienna, Sept. 28-Oct. 2, 1970, are in a single volume entitled *Deus et Homo ad mentem I. Duns Scoti* (Romae, 1972).

⁴ A. Hyman and J. J. Walsh, *Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1967), p. 556.

spite this forbidding style that repelled the humanists of the Renaissance and won for him the dubious honor of being dubbed the original "dunce," poets like Gerard Manley Hopkins or Thomas Merton found his writings inspiring and his insights unrivaled "be rival Italy or Greece."⁵

The questions Scotus discusses in this last of his major works were not of his own choosing. They were originally proposed to him in the course of a public debate and reflect some of the interests and concerns of the theological faculty and student body at the University of Paris at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Nevertheless in revising them for publication he wove in so much of his basic philosophy and theology as to make this work one of the mainstays on which his reputation as a thinker depends. It contains the "marrow of his teaching," as Luke Wadding put it, presented "with greater clarity, with a method more facile and with arguments more solid."⁶ It is of paramount importance in assessing Scotus' final position on a wide range of topics.

I Life and Works

Only after the fourteenth century, when his name had become a legend in theological and philosophical circles, did writers attempt to reconstruct something of Scotus' early life. Especially among those who venerated him as a saint, fact was mingled with fable, and by the seventeenth century, when his following was at its greatest, critical historians found it practically impossible to sift truth from fiction. Luke Wadding, the great historian of the Franciscan order, confessed that the place and date of his birth as well as his age and the date of his death are particularly uncertain.⁷ Writing in the second half of the last century, Ernest Renan remarks it would be difficult to find a famous man of the Middle Ages whose life is less known than that of Duns Scotus.⁸

⁵ "Duns Scotus's Oxford." Sonnet 44, *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 3rd edn., ed. W. H. Gardner (London, 1948), p. 84. See also Thomas Merton, "Duns Scotus," *Figures for an Apocalypse* (New York, 1947), pp. 48-49, and "Hymn for the Feast of Duns Scotus," *The Tears of the Blind Lions* (New York, 1949), pp. 6-7.

⁶ L. Wadding's "Praefatio ad lectorem," to Tome XII of *Joannis Duns Scoti opera omnia* (Lugduni, 1639), no pagination.

⁷ "Patria, aetas, mors haec plus ceteris incerta," L. Wadding, *Annales Minorum* VI (Romae, 1733), p. 41.

⁸ E. Renan, "Jean Duns Scot," *Histoire littéraire de la France* xxv (Paris, 1869), 404.

A half-century of patient research, however, has disclosed a number of facts. The early fourteenth-century manuscript tradition, for instance, provides statements to the effect that John Duns is a Scot, from Duns, who belonged to the English province of Friars Minor⁹ (the religious order founded by St. Francis of Assisi) and that he "flourished at Cambridge, Oxford, and Paris and died in Cologne."¹⁰ Having rejected Wadding's earlier suggestion that John might even have been born in Ireland, scholars agree today that Scotland is his native land. But even as late as a decade ago, they had not settled on the exact place of his birth. The fact that in the manuscripts he is called both "John Duns" and "John of Duns" suggested that Duns might be either the name of his family or of the place of his birth or both. In choosing 1966 for the International Congress to commemorate the seventh centenary of his birth, however, and in raising a cairn near the Pavilion Lodge of the Duns castle in Berwickshire, scholars honored a long tradition not only as to the site where he was born but also as to approximately when. The details of his parentage, his early schooling at Haddington, and the story of his entry into the Franciscan order as found in the so-called Tweedy transcription of the Chronicle of Scottish Franciscans cannot be trusted.¹¹ The earliest reliable date we have of Scotus is that of his ordination at St. Andrew's Church in Northampton on March 17, 1291, by Oliver Sutton, Bishop of Lincoln.¹² In view of the minimum age requirements for the priesthood, Scotus could hardly have been born later than March, 1266, and certainly not in 1274 as earlier historians claimed.

The Scots belonged jurisdictionally to the English Franciscan province. Their principal house of studies was at Oxford. Bramp-

⁹ See C. Balić, "Life and Works of John Duns Scotus," *John Duns Scotus, 1265-1291*, ed. J. K. Ryan and B. Bonansea, in *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy* 3 (Washington, D.C., 1965), 2ff.

¹⁰ The colophon of the early fourteenth-century MS. 66 of Merton College reads: "Haec de ordinatione ven. fratris J. Duns de ordine fratrum Minorum, qui floruit Cant., Oxon. et Parisiis et obiit in Colonia."

¹¹ H. Docherty, "The Brockie Forgeries," *The Innes Review* xvi (1965), 79-127; *idem*, "The Brockie MSS. and Duns Scotus," *De doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti* (Acta Congressus Scotistici Internationalis Oxonii et Edimburgi 11-17 sept. 1966 celebrati), I (Romae, 1968), 329-60.

¹² E. Longpré, "L'ordination sacerdotale du bx. Jean Duns Scot. Document 17 mars 1291," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* xxii (1929), 54-62.

ton¹³ has given the most plausible account of Scotus' studies there, based on the statutes of Oxford University. The theological program leading to the mastership in theology would have lasted some thirteen years. The last four of these would have been spent as a bachelor of theology. Of these four, the first year was usually devoted to preparing lectures on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* and the second year in delivering them.

The bachelor's role at this stage was not to give a running commentary on this theological textbook but rather to raise and answer questions of his own on topics that roughly paralleled the subject "distinctions" in Lombard. Consequently the topics John discusses in his *Lectura oxoniensis* range over the whole field of theology. When the bachelor had finished his year of lectures, he began to revise and enlarge them with a view to publication. Such a revised version was called an *ordinatio*, in contrast to his original notes (*lectura*) or a student's report (*reportatio*) of the actual lecture. If the lecturer himself corrected such a report, it was called a *reportatio examinata*. From a date mentioned in the second question of the prologue, it is clear that Scotus was already at work in 1300 on what would become his major work, the commentary on the *Sentences* known as the *Ordinatio* or *Opus oxoniense*.¹⁴

University statutes demanded that the third year be devoted to lectures on the Bible; during his final year, the bachelor *formatus*, as he was called, was required to take part in public disputations under different masters including his own. This last year can be dated rather precisely in Scotus' case. He is named among the twenty-two Franciscans, including two masters of theology, Adam of Howden and Philip of Bridlington, presented to Bishop Dalderby on July 26, 1300, for faculties to hear confessions in the friars' church at Oxford.¹⁵ Since the Franciscans had only one chair of theology at the university and there was a long list of trained bachelors waiting to incept or present their inaugural lectures, regent masters (i.e., those who occupied the official chair) were replaced annually. Adam was the twenty-eighth and Philip the twenty-ninth Oxford master, so that Philip's year of regency was just beginning. This must have coincided with Scotus' final and thirteenth year, since he

¹³ C. K. Brampton, "Duns Scotus at Oxford, 1288-1301," *Franciscan Studies* xxiv (1964), 5-20.

¹⁴ *Ordinatio*, Prolog. n.112 (1, 77).

¹⁵ A. G. Little, *The Grey Friars in Oxford* (Oxford, 1892), pp. 63-64.

was the bachelor respondent under Master Bridlington.¹⁶ This would mean, Brampton argues, that by June of 1301, Scotus had completed all requirements for the mastership in theology, yet in view of the long line ahead of him, there was little hope of incepting as an Oxford master for perhaps a decade to come.

When the English province's turn came to provide a talented candidate for the Franciscan chair of theology at the more prestigious University of Paris, Scotus was selected. One *reportatio* of his Parisian lectures indicates that he began his commentary in the autumn of 1302 and continued to June of the following year.¹⁷ But before the term came to an end the long-festered feud between King Philip the Fair and Pope Boniface VIII came to a head. Philip had taxed Church property to support his wars with England and the Pope excommunicated him. The monarch retaliated by calling for a general council of the Church to depose Boniface. He won the support of the university and French clergy generally. On June 24, 1303, a great anti-papal demonstration occurred. Mendicant friars marched through the streets of Paris. Berthold of St. Denis, Bishop of Orléans and ex-chancellor of the university, together with two Franciscans and two Dominicans addressed the demonstrators. The next day royal commissioners examined each member of the Franciscan friary to determine whose side he was on. Some seventy friars, mostly French, favored Philip whereas the rest (over eighty) sided with the Pope. Among the latter were John Scotus and Master

¹⁶ The evidence, discovered by Longpré, is contained in quarternus vi, q.20, of MS. Worcester Cath. 99; cf. A. G. Little and F. Pelster, *Oxford Theology and Theologians c. A.D. 1282-1302* (Oxford, 1934), p. 310. Cf. E. Longpré, "Philippe de Bridlington O.F.M. et le bx. Duns Scot," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* xxii (1929), 587-88. On the role of the bachelor as respondent see Little and Pelster, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-36.

¹⁷ MS. F. 69 in Worcester Cathedral Library is one of the earliest manuscripts of the *Reportata parisiensis*. The colophon at the end of the list of questions in the first book (fol. 158va) reads: "Expliciunt quaestiones super primum Sententiarum datae a fratre [J. Dons Scoto *written over erasure*] ordinis fratrum minorum Parisius anno domini M^o trecentesimo secundo intrante tertio." And at the end of the list of questions in the fourth book (fol. 160va) we read: "Expliciunt quaestiones Sententiarum datae a fratre [Johanne Duns] antedicto in studio Parisius anno domini M^oCCC^oIII." See A. G. Little, "Chronological Notes on the Life of Duns Scotus," *English Historical Review* xlvi (1932), 575; C. K. Brampton, *op. cit.*, 11ff.

Gonsalvus of Spain.¹⁸ The royal penalty was exile from France within three days. Boniface responded with a bull of August 15, 1303, suspending the university's right to grant degrees in theology and civil or canon law. As a result of his harassment and imprisonment by the King's mercenaries, however, Boniface died in October. He was succeeded by Pope Benedict XI, who in the interests of peace lifted the ban against the university in April, 1304, and not long after the King did everything to facilitate the return of the exiled students.

Just where Scotus and Master Gonsalvus spent their exile is not clear. It could be that Scotus' Cambridge lectures stem from this period, though he may have given them before coming to Paris. Be that as it may, before the summer of 1304 Scotus was back in Paris, for he functioned as bachelor respondent in the disputation *in aula* (in the hall of the bishop) when his predecessor, Giles of Ligny, was promoted to master. Meanwhile Gonsalvus had become Minister General, or head, of the Franciscan order during the Pentecost General Chapter of 1304. On November 18 of that year he wrote to the Franciscan superior at the Paris friary that the next bachelor to be licensed as regent master was "Friar John Scotus, of whose laudable life, excellent knowledge and most subtle ability as well as his other remarkable qualities I am fully informed, partly from long experience, partly from report which has spread everywhere."¹⁹

Presumably Scotus became master sometime in 1305. The period following his inception seems to have been one of great literary activity. Aided by associates and secretaries, he set out to finish the *Ordinatio* begun at Oxford, using not only the Oxford and Cambridge lectures but his Parisian ones as well. There is manuscript

¹⁸ Longpré discovered the early fourteenth-century document containing the names of the friars who sided for or against the king in the Archives Nationales in Paris and published its contents in *France franciscaine* XI (1928), 137-62, under the title "Le b. Jean Duns Scot O.F.M. pour le Saint Siège contre le Gallicanisme, Paris 25-8 juin 1303." A separate edition with practically the same title was published at Quaracchi (Florence) in 1930. For an identification of the friars of the English province listed there, see A. G. Little, *Chron. Notes*, p. 576.

¹⁹ Gonsalvus' letter dated at Ascoli in the March of Ancona, Nov. 18, 1304, and addressed to William, guardian at Paris (or his vicar), and the masters, has been frequently printed: see, e.g., H. Denifle and A. Chatelain, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis* II (Paris, 1889), 117; and Little, *Grey Friars in Oxford*, p. 220. A complete English translation can be found in Little, *Chron. Notes*, pp. 577-78.

evidence of a magisterial dispute he conducted with Guillaume Pierre Godin, O.P., against the thesis that matter is the principle of individuation,²⁰ but to date no questions publicly disputed *ordinaire*, that is to say, in regular turn with other regent masters, have been found. Some questions of this sort undoubtedly existed but they may have been incorporated in the *Ordinatio*.²¹ Scotus did engage in one solemn quodlibetal disputation during his regency, which is the work translated here. Though not as extensive in scope as the *Ordinatio*, these *Quaestiones quodlibetales* are hardly less important as they represent some of his most mature thinking. Indeed one could say that his fame as a philosopher and theologian rests largely on these two major works.

Of the minor works the most important and extensive are the *Quaestiones subtilissimae super libros Metaphysicae Aristotelis*. These may represent questions discussed privately for the benefit of the Franciscan student philosophers and theologians. The same is true of the series of logical questions occasioned by Porphyry's *Isagoge* and Aristotle's *De praedicamentis*, *De interpretatione*, and *De sophisticis elenchis*. The relatively short but important *De Primo Principio*, a compendium of what reason can prove about God, draws heavily on the *Ordinatio* and may have been completed by a confrere only after Scotus left Paris to lecture as professor of theology at the Franciscan study house in Cologne for the fall term of 1307.

November 8, 1308 is the traditional date of Scotus' death. His remains lie in the nave of the Franciscan church near the Cologne cathedral, where he is venerated as a saint.

Apparently most of his works were still in an unfinished state at the time of his death. This is true not only of the *Quodlibet*, the last question of which is only partially revised, but also the *Ordinatio*

²⁰ Cf. F. Pelster, "Handschriftliches zu Skotus mit neuen Angaben über sein Leben," *Franziskanische Studien* x (1923), 16. The question is found in Cod. Amplonianus Fol. 369 of the Stadtbibliothek, Erfurt (fols. 71vb-75rb).

²¹ We have found several references to a *quaestio ordinaria* in manuscripts of Scotus' quodlibet, and in each instance an appropriate referent on the same topic can be found in the *Ordinatio*. More important, there is at least one clear reference in Codex 137, bibliotheca communalis Assisi, the early fourteenth-century attempt of a critical edition of the *Ordinatio*, to a *quaestio ordinaria* as the source of the section copied by the scribe; cf. fol. 78vb.

cal-theological thought of the period, of a particular author, and of the general history of the times. The very nature of the dispute prevented it from being limited in scope and left it open to an infinity of problems. Any vital topic, any novel or challenging view on a contemporary subject, be it economic, social, or political, could be brought up, and the regent master could be expected to give his opinion about it. Quodlibets, in a word, contain valuable insights into the personal opinions of a master and often expressed his mind on a score of topics never touched on in any other work.³³

During the first day of regular classes following the solemn disputation, the master would discuss with his students the questions debated in the public session after freely arranging them in some orderly fashion. There can be no doubt about the existence of this review session in which the master analyzed the questions with his disciples, corrected possible errors or inaccuracies in their reports, made his terminology and ideas more precise, distinguished the essential from the incidental, classified the questions and gave them a definitive answer.³⁴

A few extant quodlibets are in the form of *reportationes* (i.e., first reports taken down at the public dispute), whereas others obviously represent a later redaction or corrected version. Reports of the public disputation reflect the lack of order in which the questions were presented, for anyone could raise any problem he wished at any time; as a result there is no semblance of order in the sequence of the questions. Occasionally, of course, one problem might suggest a second, or a particular solution might give rise to a further question. Generally those in attendance prepared their questions ahead of time but presented them when they had the chance to do so. In contrast to *reportationes* of this sort, the redaction or revision prepared by the master exhibits a coherent pattern or logical order. It reflects the second session or the later work of the master in the tranquility of his study as he edited the text for transcription by copyists and for public dissemination.³⁵

A master of theology in the thirteenth century had certain set categories he might use to group the questions in some orderly fashion. God and creatures, visible and invisible creation, creation and redemption, faith and mores, realities and symbols were favorite

³³ Glorieux, *La littérature quodl.* II, 45ff.; "Où en est la question du Quodlibet?" 411.

³⁴ Glorieux, "Le Quodlibet et ses procédés rédactionnels," 62f.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

Vivès edition is in part the *reportatio* version, it is clear that Scotus' *quodlibet* is cast in the form of an *ordinatio*. In the tradition of the Franciscan masters,⁴² it opens with a prologue introduced by a line from Scripture: "All things are difficult," says Solomon, 'because man's language is inadequate to explain them.'⁴³ Scotus then goes on to interpret these words of Ecclesiastes ascribed to "David's Son" in such a way as to suit his purposes. The distinction of things or beings, he explains, can help us classify the difficult questions that were presented to him. Like the metaphysician that he is, Scotus proceeds to divide being in terms of four classic disjunctions: created or uncreated, self-existent or not self-existent, necessary or possible, finite or infinite. The uncreated, self-existent, necessary, infinite being we call God, whereas the finite, possible, dependent being goes by the common name of creature. Questions, he tells us, were raised as regards both categories.

According to John Damascene's description, the divine perfections or attributes merge to form a simple infinite sea of substance. Nevertheless, Scotus, with his penchant for logical analysis, attempts to separate conceptually the various divine features within the Trinity and arrange them in some kind of ontological order. The logical tool he uses for this purpose is that of non-mutual implication or entailment. If the notion of B implies A, but that of A does not entail B, then A is in some sense prior to B. On this basis, he argues that questions about God in himself (*ad intra*) are prior to those which involve a relationship of the divine nature to creatures (*ad extra*). By the same token, within God, essential features (common to all three persons because of the divine essence they share) are prior to the notional features characteristic of only one or two persons. The first question as to whether the notional or essential is more immediate to the divine essence deals with these various priorities and sets the stage for the sequence in which the remaining questions are to be treated.

Since no questions were raised about essential features *ad intra*, however, Scotus begins with the five questions raised about the Trinity of persons. The first of these (Could there be several productions of the same type in God?)⁴⁴ is basically concerned with explaining why there is a trinity and only a trinity of persons in God. The second (Are these two compatible: a relation related to its op-

⁴² Glorieux, "Le Quodlibet et ses procédés rédactionnels," 81.

⁴³ Cf. o.1.

⁴⁴ *Quodl. Q. 2.*

printed by L. Vivès.⁶² Alluntis has divided the text into appropriate articles, divisions, and subdivisions so that it is possible to follow the involved dialogue of argument and counter-argument that made the use of this important source of Scotistic thought so difficult in the older editions. He has also introduced a new numbering system for the paragraphs to facilitate cross references. With the exception of the first question where we have restored a portion of the text relegated to a footnote in the Spanish edition, we have followed this numbering system, but to make it an even more effective and convenient reference device, we put before each paragraph number the number of the question followed by a decimal point. Thus 7.44, for example, would refer to question seven, paragraph number 44 in the Alluntis edition. For completeness, the traditional numbers of the Wadding edition (with all the mistakes of omission and duplication) are added in brackets in the margin. As in the Spanish version, the translators have introduced the divisions and sub-divisions they have added to the text without benefit of brackets.

Since the Wadding-Vivès edition has some obviously erroneous readings, fortunately most of them minor, the translators consulted Dr. Carl Balić, O.F.M., director, and other members of the Scotistic Commission in Rome engaged in preparing the critical Vatican edition of Scotus' Opera omnia. Of the more than eighty manuscripts available to the Commission, three, all of the early fourteenth century, were recommended as necessary and sufficient for revising the Latin text. Two are from the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich,⁶³ Clm 8717 and Clm 26309, which we have designated respectively as M₁ and M₂. Marginalia in the first suggest that the scribe who corrected it had access, if not to Scotus' own notebooks, at least to the information these contained; it may even represent the earliest form of *Quodlibetal Questions* still extant. The second, which contains substantially the same version, has a colophon giving the name of the scribe and a completion date of 1311. The third manuscript (F. 60 of the Cathedral Library of Worcester) contains

⁶² *Joannis Duns Scoti opera omnia*, 26 vols. (Parisii, 1891-95).

⁶³ A description of the contents of these two MSS. can be found in F. Pelster, *Handschriftliches*, pp. 17-21. For additional material on Clm. 8717 confer Pelster's second article "Eine Münchener Handschrift des beginnenden vierzehnten Jahrhunderts mit einem Verzeichnis von Questionen des Duns Scotus und Hervéus Natalis," *Franziskanische Studien* xvii (1930), 253-72; V. Doucet, "A propos du Cod. lat. Monacensis 8717," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* xxvi (1933), 246-47.

additions suggesting a partial revision of the earlier text. Though M₁ and M₂ seem to belong to the same family, omissions in one not made by the other and vice versa suggest they stem from a common source rather than that either is directly dependent on the other. The third, which we designate as W, seems to some extent closer to the Wadding-Vivès version.

As M₁ clearly indicates, the revision or ordinatio of the Quodlibet was left unfinished. Question 21 ends abruptly with the words: "Tertium membrum" (Cf. 21.16) with the marginal note: "Finis. Quodlibet repertum in suis quaternis. Quod sequitur est de Reportatione."⁶⁴ M₂ and W, on the other hand, simply append the original report of the question in its entirety, whereas the Wadding-Vivès text tries somewhat unsuccessfully to avoid overlap by eliminating the first part of the *reportatio* covered in the main by the material in the revised version. A simple comparison of the first part of the *reportatio* version (which we have translated in its entirety) indicates how extensive was the additional material Scotus wove into the framework of the question as originally "determined." This might explain also how it would have been possible to discuss, at least briefly, in a single session the set of questions that make up this *Quodlibet*. Another interesting aspect revealed by the manuscripts is that in several places Scotus refers to a *quaestio ordinaria* where he has treated objections raised, but not answered, in the expanded revision of the present work.

Judging from the three MSS as well as internal evidence, we are of the opinion that most of the Additions found in the Wadding-Vivès texts were added by hands other than Scotus. Since they are useful, however, in providing references, usually to the *ordinatio*, where solutions to objections left unanswered can be found, we have added them in the Appendix. On the other hand, additions found in all or some of the MSS we have used, if relevant to a better understanding of the text, have been put into footnotes. Some of these seem to be simply earlier versions of parallel passages and probably would have been eventually eliminated had Scotus lived to see the revision of the *Quodlibet* completed.

A glossary of technical terms has been included to reduce the number of explanatory footnotes. Since each question represents an integral treatise in its own right and may be read independently of

⁶⁴ Clm. 8717, fol. 85vb: "The end! The Quodlibet as found in his notebooks. What follows is from the 'reportatio.'"