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Book Review: Stephen Langton, *Quaestiones Theologiae. Liber 1. Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi, 22* edited by Riccardo Quinto and Magdalena Bieniak

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Riccardo Quinto and Magdalena Bieniak, editors. *Stephen Langton, Quaestiones Theologiae*. Liber I. Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi, 22. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. xviii + 491. Cloth, \$150.00.

Stephen Langton, as archbishop of Canterbury during the reign of the infamous King John, and very possibly the one responsible for setting down in writing what would be known as the *Magna Carta*, had not the leisure in his years of intense political involvement to oversee the publication of his earlier theological writings as master of sacred science at the University of Paris. Heretofore little scholarly attention has been paid to his theology. Twenty years ago, however, there appeared an edition of his *Sentences* commentary in the *Beiträge* (edited by Artur Landgraf). The edition of the first book of his *Quaestiones theologiae*, reviewed here, signals the continuation of the attempt to redress this deficiency.

This volume, the first of a projected five, contains twenty-three titles, with a number of them having additional versions that resist collation with the version in the manuscript bearing the *siglum* C, bringing the grand total number to forty questions. When completed, the *Quaestiones* of Langton will comprise four books with a total of 173 questions, corresponding roughly to Lombard's division, plus a fifth book, which will contain 33 *quaestiones* gathered from manuscripts other than C.

The editors were guided in their editorial project by three fundamental assumptions. First, Langton's theological questions originated in classroom discussions conducted at the Paris *studium*. Second, nearly every question has its own, individually written archetype or archetypes, recorded in folios, bifolios, quires, and "even single pieces of parchment." Third, Langton himself never prepared a final edition of his corpus of *Quaestiones*. Given these assumptions, the editors claim nevertheless that it is possible to reconstruct separately the "tenor" of the archetype of each textual version—even the "unstable notes" of the reporters (130).

The collection of Langton's theological questions, one must be clear, is distinct from his *Sentences* Commentary, and yet their division into books also seems at first glance to

follow Peter Lombard's ordering. On further examination, however, it becomes evident that Langton's work bears only a remote resemblance to Lombard's. Langton begins, for example, with a question on essential names, that is, the names that signify the divine essence. This is followed by two different versions concerning the appropriated power of the Father to generate, and so forth—quite different from Lombard's *modus procedendi*.

In fact, the portrait of Langton the theologian that emerges from this and Landgraf's earlier edition is that of an independent thinker, not easily classified or grouped with any twelfth-century school, although it seems he did know the *Summa* of Gilbert of Poitiers. There is ample evidence, on the other hand, that Langton's theological positions exerted a strong influence on the *Summa aurea* of William of Auxerre.

The questions edited in the volume under review are found in no fewer than a dozen manuscripts, but no single manuscript contains all thirty-eight questions that constitute book one of the *Quaestiones*. In fact, as the editors so lucidly summarize the situation, "Langton's literary heritage reflects his teaching activity, and what we can read has come down to us through the filter represented by his pupils and hearers" (12). Their presumption is that the corpus of the theological questions never received a final redaction by the master himself and therefore justify the construction of a distinct *stemma codicum* for each question.

But does this extensive apparatus leave the reader with the impression that the text is more stable than it is, notwithstanding the caveats of the editors? The argument that Leonard Boyle used to make is that there are so many manuscript witnesses that have either been destroyed or remain unidentified that any diagram of the surviving copies is in most cases misleading. Indeed, the editors admit that "the transmission of Langton's *Quaestiones* was very chaotic, without any inviolable rules" (44).

Secondly, given the paucity of copies of most of the questions under consideration—would not a scribal edition, the prospect of which is rejected by the editors, have made more sense? The advantage is that it is more honest and does not pretend to deliver what cannot realistically be delivered. The Langton *quaestiones* produced by the editors, as they readily admit, historically never existed as such.

There are, it should be noted, not a few infelicities in the English introduction (several rendering the meaning unintelligible: for example, "small groups of questions that . . . have been *diffused together*" (45), and since neither editor is a native speaker, one would have thought that the British Academy's editorial staff would have taken greater care with the language.

Notwithstanding my animadversions, establishing any hitherto unedited text is always a significant legacy to scholarship; it is now up to intellectual historians to fit Langton's text—no matter how unstable—into the context of late twelfth-century theology and to assess the archbishop's unique contribution to the theologies emanating from the Paris *studium*. We are indeed in the debt of Riccardo Quinto and Magdalena Bieniak.

R. JAMES LONG