



PONTIFICAL INSTITUTE OF MEDIAEVAL STUDIES

Holcot, Robert. *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason. Three Questions on the Nature of God.* Edited by Hester Goodenough Gelber. *Studies and Texts* 62. 1983; viii, 130 pp. ISBN 0-88844-062-6 | 978-0-88844-062-4.

The relationship between faith and reason reached a point of crisis in the fourteenth century, precipitated by the application of increasingly sophisticated techniques of logic to the Doctrine of the Trinity. The crisis arrived in the form of the questions, “Is Aristotelian logic universally valid?” and “Is the Christian bound by the dictates of the Church to believe what is contradictory, or seems contradictory?”

Robert Holcot, a Dominican who studied at Oxford during the years 1330–1334, treated these difficulties at length in his three *quodlibetal* questions on the nature of God. He perceived the problems facing faith and logic in the broadest light. His work not only contains an extended analysis of the problems that paradoxes in religious doctrine posed for philosophy but also contains an equivalent analysis of the difficulties posed for philosophy by the paradoxes of Classical Antiquity. In the process he collected an extensive catalogue of various kinds of arguments that seemed to threaten the primacy and universality of logic.

Holcot’s education took place in the wake of William of Ockham’s career at Oxford and of the beatification of Thomas Aquinas. His three *quodlibeta* show him making his way through the chop created by the cross currents of Thomist and Ockhamist theology. The result is an independent, Thomist-influenced Ockhamism. Holcot’s work is, therefore, an important source of information for those interested in medieval *insolubilia*, in the effects of Ockhamism at Oxford, and in fourteenth-century Dominican theology.

A discussion of the textual problems connected with editing Holcot’s *quodlibeta* and a reconstruction of the probable order of questions in three of Holcot’s *quodlibetal* determinations are part of the introduction and the appended tables.