

Andrew Rabin, Liam Felsen (ed.), The »Disputatio Puerorum«. A Ninth-Century Monastic Instructional Text, Toronto (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies) 2017, VIII–102 p. (Toronto Medieval Latin Texts, 34), ISBN 978-0-88844-484-4, EUR 17,50.

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The »Disputatio Puerorum« is a set of questions and answers about the six days of creation, the nature of man and how he is an image of God, soul and mind and the five senses, an elaborate discussion of the meanings of *spiritus*, the ten names of God, the six ages of the world, time, months and seasons, the Old and New Testaments, listing the books explaining their names and very briefly summarizing their contents, ecclesiastic orders and ceremonies, faith, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

The title is found in the manuscript which is the base of this edition, Vienna ÖNB 458, copied at Salzburg on the orders of the magister Baldo in the second quarter of the ninth century, as the colophon states. This manuscript also contains a collection of works by Alcuin, which probably explains why the »Disputatio« has been attributed to him. The work is called a »disputatio« in lines 12, 665 and 707. The editors have identified a passage from Alcuin's »De Orthographia« (lines 858–859) which provides a helpful terminus for the composition of this work.

Rabin and Felsen provide helpful notes on the sources for these questions, chiefly Isidore's »De Natura Rerum« and »De Ecclesiasticis Officiis«, and the anonymous sermon »De Traditione Symboli«, with definitions from Isidore's »Etymologiae«. They suggest that the »Disputatio« offers useful insight into the sort of training received by novices and oblates. Recent work by Stefan Patzold and Carine van Rhijn shows that it might also be a handbook for a rural priest. The question and answer format, which the editors link to training in grammar, was also common in theology as Gustave Bardy, documented in a series of articles »La littérature patristique des »Quaestiones et responsiones« sur l'Écriture Sainte« (Revue biblique 41 [1932] and 42 [1933]).

The editors list »the six extant manuscripts containing all or part of the *Disputatio*«. I am not clear why the editors assign one of these, St Petersburg O v l 7, to Northern France, since Bischoff believed that it was copied in Salzburg, like the base manuscript used here. The St Petersburg manuscript contains a full copy of the text, and not a fragment, as the editors assert on page 6. It deserved a proper treatment. Two other incomplete ninth century copies of the »Disputatio«, a further fragment now in Toronto, and a manuscript with excerpts were copied at St Emmeram Regensburg. So the text was most probably composed at Regensburg or Salzburg, as the editors suggest.

The Italian website [Mirabile](#) has a fuller list of manuscripts, making it clear that either the Salzburg manuscript contains a composite work, or that the »Disputatio« was frequently excerpted. The late 10th century Freising manuscript Munich clm 6385 has a complete text of the »Disputatio«, which is not mentioned in this edition. Sections are found in the 9th century manuscripts Zürich Rheinau 104 f. 94–98 and St



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Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek 732 p. 167–168 (probably from Freising). Chapter IX on the Lord's Prayer is found in the 9th century manuscripts Munich clm 14508 (from St Emmeram Regensburg), Orleans 116 f. 81r–83v (from Fleury), Paris, [Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 1535](#), f. 153v–154r (from Western France), St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek 40, Vienna ÖNB 1370 (from Mondsee), Sélestat, [Bibliothèque municipale \(Bibliothèque humaniste\) 132](#), f. 17r–18r (copied at Mainz), Düsseldorf, [Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, B. 113 II](#), f. 111v–113v, (from the Rhineland), and Ghent 324 f. 32–37 (copied in Mainz or Trier) and in the 11th century manuscripts Troyes, [Médiathèque du Grand Troyes, Fonds ancien 1979](#), f. 330r–332v, and Weimar, [Herzogin-Anna-Amalia-Bibliothek 4o 39 I](#), f. 96v–97v, 98v–100r.

Rabin and Felsen make no mention of the work of the late Susan Keefe, who listed and edited Carolingian texts on baptism and the Creed, including question and answer texts like the »Disputatio«. Keefe, Patzold and van Rhijn have carefully studied these kinds of text, and explored how they might have been used. Had Rabin and Felsen followed their work they could have considered the possibility that the »Disputatio« may take us outside the monastic school, and give us a sense of how the Carolingian reform movement attempted to teach the rudiments of Christianity to a wider audience.

The editor of Bede's »Opera Didascalica« was Charles W. Jones, not Christopher as printed in the bibliography and on page 21.

Mittelalter – Moyen Âge (500–1500)

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