
Antidotum contra venenum effusum per fratrem Martinum de Atheca, praedicatorem; Praesentatio facta Burdegaliae

Jaume Mensa i Valls (cur.)

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MARIA CABRÉ DURAN

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

maria.cabre@uab.cat

We are celebrating the issuance of a new volume from the “Arnaldi de Villanova Opera Theologica Omnia” (AVOThO) collection, which has been publishing the theological works by the Catalan physician and theologian Arnau de Vilanova since 2002. This collection, which contains the research results of the Arnau de Vilanova Section of the Centre de Filosofia i Teologia Medievals Catalanes, is endorsed by financing and recognition from the prestigious Union Académique Internationale, which has included it in the Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi.

This time, professor Jaume Mensa i Valls (Institut d'Estudis Catalans and Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), who is currently in charge of the collection, has edited the work *Antidotum contra venenum effusum per fratrem Martinum de Atheca, praedicatorem*, along with the *Praesentatio facta Burdegaliae*. This is volume XII of the AVOThO, even though it is actually the sixth volume in the collection, given that its plan respects the historical chronology of Arnau de Vilanova's works.

The *Antidotum*, only some excerpts of which had been published to date, has been conserved in two manuscripts: the *Vat. lat.* 3824 at the Vatican Apostolic Library, and the *Canon Misc.* 370 at Oxford's Bodleian Library. This is the text that concludes the polemic around Arnau's eschatological theses with the professors of Paris and the Dominican theologians between 1300 and 1305. As the title indicates, it is a theological antidote against the statements of the Dominican friar Martín de Ateca in his *Tractatus contra denuntiationes Gerundenses*, a work which has unfortunately been lost. The Aragon-born Martín de Ateca, who Arnau claimed had been his friend – and who, in fact, actually called Arnau “*confessor meus*” (pp. 78, 499) – had sought to attack the eschatological doctrine that Arnau had upheld in works like *De tempore adventus Antichristi*

(AVOThO; V, 2014) and *De mysterio cymbalaorum* (AVOThO; VI, currently in the process of publication). Even though Arnau claimed that the objective of the *Antidotum* was not to respond to the objections, in it he does comment on and refute the Dominican's *Tractatus* chapter-by-chapter, pointing out its incoherences and poorly reasoned arguments. Counter to what we may expect, given that it is the last doctrinal and confrontational work that Arnau wrote, the outcome is a fragmented text without a well thought-out expository order. More than presenting Martín's arguments as counter to reason, Arnau actually states that the possible cause of his delusion might be a mental disorder ("egritudo sue mentis", pp. 109, 1067-1068).

As in the collection's other volumes, this publication has an extensive introductory study (pp. 9-45) in which Jaume Mensa presents the historical context of the work, the date and circumstances in which it was composed and a summary and analysis of its content. This study features a part that aims to reconstruct the doctrinal polemic around the eschatology of Augustine of Hippo, given that Arnau's interpretation of some of this author's excerpts is one of the cruxes or underpinnings of his own eschatological proposal. In fact, the doctrinal debate between Arnau and his detractors around the possibility and value of knowing and calculating the coming of the Antichrist and the end times in advance revolves around the interpretation of some of Augustine's texts. Augustine, and his interpretation of certain biblical passages, was therefore the authority that each author interpreted in such a way as to reinforce his own thesis, even though this often led to contrasting positions. In his *Antidotum*, Arnau's last polemical writing, he offers his most elaborate, solid and definitive interpretation, which is why the text had received previous attention from the curator of this new work (cf. *SVMMA. Revista de Cultures Medievales*, 18 [2021], pp. 39-59).

The text of the *Antidotum* occupies the central pages of the volume (pp. 49-111), where in addition to the text, the editor adds a set of variants (from the different manuscripts and editions), a series of sources and an extensive section with comments. After that, the volume includes a word table (pp. 113-139), another noteworthy hallmark of AVOThO publications.

The second part of the publication is taken up by the study (pp. 145-167) and text (pp. 171-189) of the *Praesentatio facta Burdegaliae*, with its own word table (pp. 191-203). This is the affidavit and text that Arnau de Vilanova read to Pope Clement V on 24 August 1305 – shortly after he had written the *Antidotum* – in the archiepiscopal palace in Bordeaux. Arnau presented all his theological works to the Holy See at this event, which prestigious bishops, abbots and priors attended. In the text, Arnau reiterates his protest and plea; that is, he explains the background leading to the conflict thus far; he cites and attacks some of the professional theologians' theses, the most interesting contribution in terms of doctrine; and he essentially offers and describes the content of his theological works, which had been attacked and persecuted for five years. The Pope then responded: after praising Arnau's science, he claimed that he reserved the judgement and examination of his theological works for himself and the Holy See (pp. 188, 373-374). This decision was extremely important in Arnau de Vilanova's life because it called a halt to the conflict between him and the professional theologians, whose arguments and personal

upheaval had escalated since the publication of *De tempore*, as attested to in the *Antidotum*. After that response, the campaign that the Parisian theologians had waged against Arnau to strip him of his legitimacy and paint him as unfit came to an abrupt end. In fact, if the *Antidotum* is the last doctrinal text engaged in the theological polemic, the *Praesentatio* is the official document that signals the end, at least for a while.

The volume closes with a bibliography citing the references in both editions (pp. 213-232), the final tables – which contain biblical citations, anthroponyms and anonymous works and manuscripts – and the contents or general index. The volume thus fills two gaps in studies of Arnau: neither of the two works have previously been the subject of critical editions or complete monographic studies. We would like to congratulate the curator of this work for his efforts, and everyone who has made this collection possible. We are looking forward to being surprised soon by a new volume which will help to define and reconstruct Arnau's theological thinking and the historical circumstances in which it was composed and disseminated.