

## Boekbesprekingen — Comptes rendus

M. SCHRAMA, O.S.A., *Gabriël Biel en zijn leer over de Allerheiligste Drievuldigheid volgens het eerste boek van zijn Collectorium* (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für die Herausgabe ungedruckter Texte aus der mittelalterlichen Geisteswelt 9). München, Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981, xxx-285 pp.

Nominalism, of which Gabriel Biel (c. 1410-1495) is a late representative, was until quite recently regarded as one of the three factors, besides Augustine and German mysticism, that were conclusive as to the development of Luther. Consequently Biel was studied for a long time within the framework of his mediatorship between Ockham and Luther. Twenty years ago, however, a start was made in studying Biel as an independent thinker.

The study by Schrama may be considered an important contribution to this changed attitude towards Biel and nominalism. The author's intention with this book is in the first place to put an end to the prejudices against nominalism; secondly to moderate the view that Biel followed Ockham slavishly; and finally to see how Biel deals with the doctrine on Trinity.

Later scholasticism shows a struggle between the realists and the nominalists. Interest centres in the discussion around the theme of the *universalia*: does a *universale* exist as a reality outside man (*reales*) or is it only a result of man's act of thinking (*nominales*)? The *via moderna* only regards the concrete as real and the universal as that which must be explained. Nominalism is, as it were, a «*Zurück zu den Sachen selbst*».

With regard to Greek philosophy with its optimism concerning the acquisition of the highest knowledge, the realists and nominalists in scholasticism take a more pessimistic view of the natural knowledge of God. Theology relies on the revelation whereas philosophy becomes an independent science of natural knowledge. If such a distinction is made between the domains of philosophy and theology, will a double truth arise then? Restricting the answer to this question to nominalism, it may be said that nominalism indeed speaks about a separation of faith and reason; but hardly any representative speaks about an unbridgeable gap. This means that there is still a relationship between divine grace and human effort. In connection with this Ockham, Gregory of Rimini, Peter of Ailly, and Biel — except Holcot — will reject the *logica fidei*. There is a universal validity of the application of logic, for the principle of contradiction can also be applied to the mystery of Trinity.

The *Collectorium* of Gabriel Biel is a comment on the *Liber Sententiarum* of Peter Lombard, the *Magister Sententiarum*. In this study



Schrama has confined himself to the first book of Biel's *Collectorium*, which deals with the doctrine on the triune God. The study is fundamental-theological in nature: it concerns the immanent Trinity. The doctrine on the salvational working of Trinity is not discussed. In the first book of the *Collectorium* Biel relies on the results of Ockham's thinking, not so much in order to reproduce the latter's doctrine, as to write a contemporary theology based on it.

Language is for Biel, and for all his adherents, the only way to come to God and creation. Knowledge is not an image, but a sign of the reality. «*Supponere*» is then putting signs into a proposition instead of reality. In this way knowledge has been reduced to mainly a matter of language. Nevertheless logic in theology must not be overestimated, because knowledge of God is not merely a logical affair. The teaching of Biel on Trinity is also based upon the revelation, which again is contained in Holy Scripture, the Fathers and the articles of faith.

According to Biel the introduction of the *distinctio formalis*, i.e. the distinction between the divine persons and the divine essence, is necessary, so that a more or less logical understanding of God as the triune God remains possible. In this way there does not arise a radical gap between faith and reason, and the validity of logic is maintained. But because of the deficiency of human knowledge there seems to be an irrationality in the thinking about the immanent essence of God. The *distinctio formalis*, however, does not give a real insight in the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

In order to enable the human intellect to penetrate into the data of belief, terms like «*imago*», «*vestigium*» and «*esse*» are used. «*Imago*» and «*vestigium*» are terms, expressing the confidence of Biel that God comes to meet his creation. At the same time these terms express a distance between God and creature.

The conditions to accept the *distinctio formalis* are: 1) identity; 2) contradiction; 3) real-not-essential distinction. The logical distinction presupposes the real-not-essential distinction, in that the latter is the basis of the former. In short, this is what can be said about both kinds of distinctions: in the real-not-essential distinction the Father and Son in Trinity are not identical and yet they are identical in the divine essence; in the *distinctio formalis* the essence is Father and the essence is Son and still Father and Son are not identical. Or, to choose another formulation: whereas in the real-not-essential distinction individuality is especially emphasized, in the *distinctio formalis* the universal aspect is stressed as the point of departure and yet the aspect of individuality is not excluded. It is exactly by the application of the *distinctio formalis* that Biel leaves room for St. Augustine's psychological doctrine about the Trinity. Augustine's doctrine has especially been delineated in his *De Trinitate*, stressing the unity of God and, at the same time, emphasizing the role of the divine persons, because each of the persons manifests himself in this world in his special way.



Biel makes use of Augustine's teaching on Trinity to explain the difference between being generated and being emanated. According to Vignaux the nominalists have emphasized the divine unity to such an extent that it has become impossible to develop a divine psychology. Inevitable the question arises, on how the conceptions of will and intellect function in Biel's teaching on Trinity. Intellect and will are not distinguished in God, neither formally nor in reality; but they may be distinguished by means of «connotation», a term of logic. It is for this reason that Biel excludes the acts of knowing and willing as separately operating principles in the process of the generation of the Son and of the emanation of the Spirit. The only basic operating principle is the divine essence itself. In other words there is a generation in God because God *is* and not because God is willing or knowing. The acts of knowing and willing, however, can be considered as present in the process of generation by connotation; the generation connotes an act of intelligence and the emanation connotes an act of willing.

When considering the emanation of the Spirit, Biel makes use of St. Augustine's statement: «The divine essence is the basis upon which the Father is existing and the Son is originating». The Son distinguished himself from the Father in nothing but in the process of generation. Next the concept «*constitutum*» is introduced in order to underline the unity between the Father and the Son as a unity in duality.

Biel makes use of the *suppositio mediata* to avoid the introduction of a fourth element in Trinity. The *suppositio mediata* is the projection of the existence of the *distinctio formalis* on the field of logic. Biel introduces the concept in order to make the exchange of two terms in a proposition possible by the introduction of a third. Owing to the formal distinction between the persons and the essence in Trinity «essence» can neither be a direct supposition for a person, nor in reverse «person» for the essence. But it is not impossible for «essence» to be an indirect supposition for a person. Availing himself of the concept of *suppositio mediata* Biel avoids the introduction of the *constitutum* as a fourth element i.e. the union of Father and Son from which the Spirit emanates.

But if the unity of God is emphasized so strongly, would not that abolish the distinction of such substances as divine wisdom and love as testified by Scripture? Biel counters this objection by saying that on the one hand «wisdom» and «love» are suppositions for the essence of God and not for a divine person nor for a relation, and that on the other hand by means of appropriation «wisdom» tends to be reserved for the Son, while «love» for the Holy Spirit.

Biel has made it his point to demonstrate that in God there exist no more than three really distinct entities. Consequently the various qualities or realities do not correspond to the several names for each single person in Trinity.

Summing up the substance of Schrama's dissertation we shall summarize the contents of each chapter. Chapter I gives the most



important facts of Biel's life, and also the *status quaestionis* supplemented by a survey of the problems concerning late medieval nominalism (p. 1-21). Chapter II contains an explanation of Biel's logic, especially concerning its terminology. This study of Biel's logic is a prelude to the discussion of Biel's epistemology and theological method (p. 22-51). Chapter III investigates the epistemology, which is of a theological nature, and it clearly indicates what can be and what cannot be known about God. Biel's distinction between God's absolute order and the created order plays an important part in this chapter (p. 52-83). Chapter IV completes the prolegomena. Biel's theological method is examined and explained, and it appears that his method largely depends on the linguistic approach (p. 84-132). Chapter V sets out to reproduce the strict doctrine on Trinity. The originating of the Son by generation and of the Spirit by emanation is dealt with (p. 133-211). Chapter VI deals with the interpretation of the terms «*persona*», «*constitutum*» and «*relatio*» (p. 212-279).

In conclusion we might say that the dissertation of Schrama is to be considered as an important contribution to the study of Biel's doctrine on Trinity. His inquiry shows a great sense of justice towards the nominalistic theology and it also brings to light the special interest of Schrama for the influence of St. Augustine on Gabriel Biel.

P. DE WIND

*Gabrielis Biel Collectorium circa quattuor libros Sententiarum. Liber tertius.* Ausp. H. RÜCKERT†, ed. W. WERBECK et U. HOFMANN, coll. V. SIEVERS et R. STEIGER. Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr, 1979, xx-704 pp., DM 398.

In 1973 verscheen de eerste aflevering van de tekstcritische uitgave van Biels *Collectorium*. Het ging toen om de *Prologus et Liber primus*. Met de regelmaat van twee jaar verscheen in 1975 *Liber quartus, pars prima*, in 1977 *Liber quartus, pars secunda* en in 1979 *Liber tertius*. Ook dit laatste deel is voorbeeldig uitgegeven. Het bevat, behalve Biels tekst, gebaseerd op de gedrukte uitgave Tübingen 1501 (*T*) en op Ms Giessen UB 734 (*G*), een tekstcritisch- en een bronnenapparaat.

De uitgevers hebben *T* als uitgangspunt genomen. Ze vergeleken deze tekst met de editie van Bazel 1508 (*B*) en Lyon 1514 (*L*), en hebben hem gecorrigeerd aan de hand van *G*. Ms *G* geeft weliswaar niet de uiteindelijke tekst zoals die gedrukt is, maar werd toch verhoudingsgewijs kort vóór de uitgave voltooid, namelijk op 13 augustus 1489. Het handschrift, waarvan niet duidelijk vaststaat, dat het door Biel zelf is vervaardigd, begint in 1488, want: «*Sexto sequitur quod, si Verbum nunc dimitteret naturam humanam eamque conservaret, verum esset quod homo 1488 annorum inciperet esse naturalis filius Mariae. Tot enim anni fluxerunt a nativitate Christi usque ad diem, dum haec scribimus*» (p. 116).