

DUNS SCOTUS ON DIVINE LOVE: TEXTS AND COMMENTARIES ON GOODNESS AND FREEDOM, GOD AND HUMANS edited by A. Vos, H. Veldhuis, E. Dekker, N. W. den Bok, and A. J. Beck, *Ashgate, Aldershot*, 2003, Pp. x + 235, £35.00, hbk.

That the Franciscan tradition, and Duns Scotus in particular, lay especial emphasis on love and the will is a commonplace of the history of theology. Here the Utrecht University 'Research Group Duns Scotus' presents a series of texts and translations, with very helpful commentaries, focused on God's goodness and love. The Group includes some highly respected Scotus scholars (most notably Antonie Vos), and works through the Scotist texts with great care and deliberation. A previous publication (*Contingency and Freedom: Lectura I 39* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994)) centred on the question of Scotus's modal theory in its relation to freewill, and the present volume, while freestanding, could usefully be thought of as a companion volume, continuing further the exploration of Scotus's account of action and ethics. The central claim of the earlier volume was that the notion of 'synchronic contingency' is the hermeneutical key that unlocks Scotist thought. Contingency is basically to be conceived of in terms of alternative logically possible states of affairs. This is the foundation of Scotus's libertarian or 'contra-causal' theory of freedom: the will has it in its power at one and the same time to freely to choose between alternative possibilities. This theory covers all will, divine and human, and grounds Scotus's assertion that quite literally everything other than God is (logically) contingent.

The selections and commentaries in the present volume bring out very effectively what is distinctive about Scotus's position on the various ethical and theological issues discussed. After a preliminary section on necessity and contingency, the authors present two long selections on the relation between these notions and ethics. The precept that we should love God above all is, according to the authors, the 'cornerstone' (p. 8) of Scotus's treatment of ethics, since love of God entails that we love both ourselves and our neighbour. But Scotus holds that the ethical precepts governing our love for things other than God are contingent. The authors argue against the recent interpretation of Thomas Williams, according to which Scotus is a thoroughgoing ethical voluntarist or positivist. The authors maintain that God's nature, as maximally good, acts as a kind of check on the range of things that God can will: 'Every possible divine act is ethically [*sic*] good, because all possible decisions of God are situated within the range constituted by his best possible nature' (p. 61). I suspect that the jury is still out on this debate. What is certainly clear is that Scotus does not want God's will to be restrained in any way specifically by the contents of his *intellect*. But this is perhaps consistent with positing that the divine *nature* is the relevant restraining factor. God's will, after all, could be non-consciously restrained, such that God's freedom does not range over every logically possible state of affairs.

All but the very final selection – about one half of the whole book – consider the question of God's goodness in relation to human salvation: merit, election, and God's permitting reprobation. The authors take a distinctive view on this interpretatively problematic subject. Scotus wants to reject the view that reprobation is undeserved, and to do this he develops a complex theory of divine permission, according to which for God to permit something is for God to will that he abstain from an act of will that would prevent the thing. Reprobation is permitted in this sense: not willed *per se*, but not willed to be prevented. Election and salvation are not like this, however: these are actively willed by God. This position is designed to avoid the view that God actively wills both election and reprobation prior to foreseen merits. What is not clear is how seriously we are supposed to take the asymmetry. Scotus asserts that God gives to the reprobate 'natural gifts and the right laws, and common assistance, sufficient for salvation' (p. 169). But if God's active will is required for salvation, these things cannot be 'sufficient'. According to the authors, God's failure to will (say) Judas's salvation

results from Judas's free choice to persist in sin. But Scotus is elsewhere quite clear that making divine knowledge and activity contingent on anything external to God 'demeans the divine intellect'. These are hard texts, but it would have been helpful to see how the Research Group would build this into their reading.

The final selection is on the procession of the Holy Spirit – an infinite act of divine self-love. The selection shows how God's will is constrained to love the supreme good (i.e. himself), and how it is that love is at the heart of Scotist theology as well as of his ethics. Overall, a very helpful selection of texts and commentaries, written in a style that will make it useful not only to specialists but also to undergraduates and others interested in an accessible presentation of this distinctive Franciscan theology.

RICHARD CROSS

THE CONCEPT OF WOMAN, Volume II: The Early Humanist Reformation, 1250–1500, by Sister Prudence Allen RSM, Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2002, xxiv + 1161 pp.

In the first volume, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 BC–AD 1250*, Sister Prudence Allen, professor of philosophy at St John Vianney Theological Seminary, Denver, Colorado, traced the concept of woman from the beginnings of Western philosophy until the High Middle Ages. This was the history of the dominance of what she calls the 'gender-polarity' concept of woman: woman is inferior to man, physically, psychologically, morally and spiritually.

Now, in this massively documented and brilliantly conducted work of scholarship, Allen takes us from the leading thinkers of the High Middle Ages through to the concept of woman that unfolds in Renaissance humanism. Gradually, over these 250 years, the 'gender-polarity' concept gives way to the concept of 'gender-complementarity with equality'. This time, however, we hear the voices of women themselves, attended to for the most part in primary sources, many of which have never been previously researched, and none of which has ever been integrated into a work of philosophical insight on this scale.

The structure of the book is as follows. Chapter 1 opens up the archive of medieval women's religious communities, revealing their unself-conscious self-understanding, with models of wisdom and virtue, for example, which assume that woman is a generic model for all human beings (Beatrice of Nazareth, Hadewijch, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete and others). Chapter 2 deals with gender polarity in some male philosophers in the medieval university milieu, captivated by Aristotelian logic (Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas especially). Chapter 3 highlights the assumptions in contemporary satires about women (*Le Roman de la rose*, *Le Livre de Mathéolus*, 'Frau Welt', *L'Évangile aux Femmes*, a couple of *dits* and Boccaccio's *Corbaccio*): monotonously denigratory. Chapter 4 breathes a completely different air: dialogues in which men respect women (Cavalcanti and the Lady, Dante and Beatrice, Petrarch and Laura, Boccaccio and Fiammetta). Chapter 5 describes how the idea developed, in leading women religious authors (Mechthild of Hackeborn, Gertrude the Great of Helfta, Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Siena and Julian of Norwich) – with twenty pages on 'the Dominican influence': Eckhart, Tauler and Suso, all of course formed in the Aristotelian gender-polarity tradition, nevertheless disclosing a certain openness towards gender complementarity. Partly this is because of their Neoplatonism, which tended to a gender unity theory; and partly, no doubt, because they were frequently in conversation with women religious, often at least as intelligent as themselves.

The path was not smooth, however. Chapter 6 deals with new coarse and unlovely satires against women (*Le Miroir de mariage*, *Les Quinze joies de*