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Jesus Crucified and Gentle Mary

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Denis Vincent Wiseman, O.P.

JESUS CHRIST CRUCIFIED AND GENTLE MARY

SALVATION AND MARY IN THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF CATHERINE OF SIENA

Vidimus et approbamus

Johann G. Roten, S.M., Ph.D., S.T.D., Director
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Daytonensis (USA), ex aedibus International Marian Research Institute, et Romae,
ex aedibus Pontificiae Facultatis Theologicae Marianum, die 8 Septembris 2006

“AL NOME DI GESÙ CRISTO CROCIFISSO E DI MARIA DOLCE”

Dedicated in memory of my parents,
John and Helen Wiseman

Realize...that the first garment which we had was love, for we were created in the image and likeness of God only through love. A person is not able to be without love since he is made only of this love. Whatever he has, in soul and in body, he has through love since his father and his mother gave being to their child, that is, the substance of his flesh, by the grace of God, only through love.

(Catherine of Siena, Letter IX)

I would like to express my gratitude to Sr. Suzanne Noffke, O.P., and Giuliana Cavallini, for their scholarly labors on Catherine's texts and for their generous help with my research.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to Fr. Johann G. Roten, S.M., the Director of the International Marian Research Institute, for his assistance in this project. An apparently coincidental, but surely providential, meeting of Fr. Johann Roten and Sr. Suzanne Noffke provided the reassurance that brought this work to life.

I heartily thank Fr. John Allard, O.P., for his extensive proofreading, suggestions, and encouragement. I must also acknowledge the enthusiasm for this project of the now-deceased Fr. Dominic Rover, O.P., who thought each new quotation from Catherine was life-changing.

Thanks are also due to Sr. Marian Sartain, O.P., for early editorial assistance, to Sr. Paolo Cassetta, O.P., for reviewing the translations from Italian, and to Sr. M. Jean Frisk and Cecilia A. Mushenheim for preparing the text for printing.

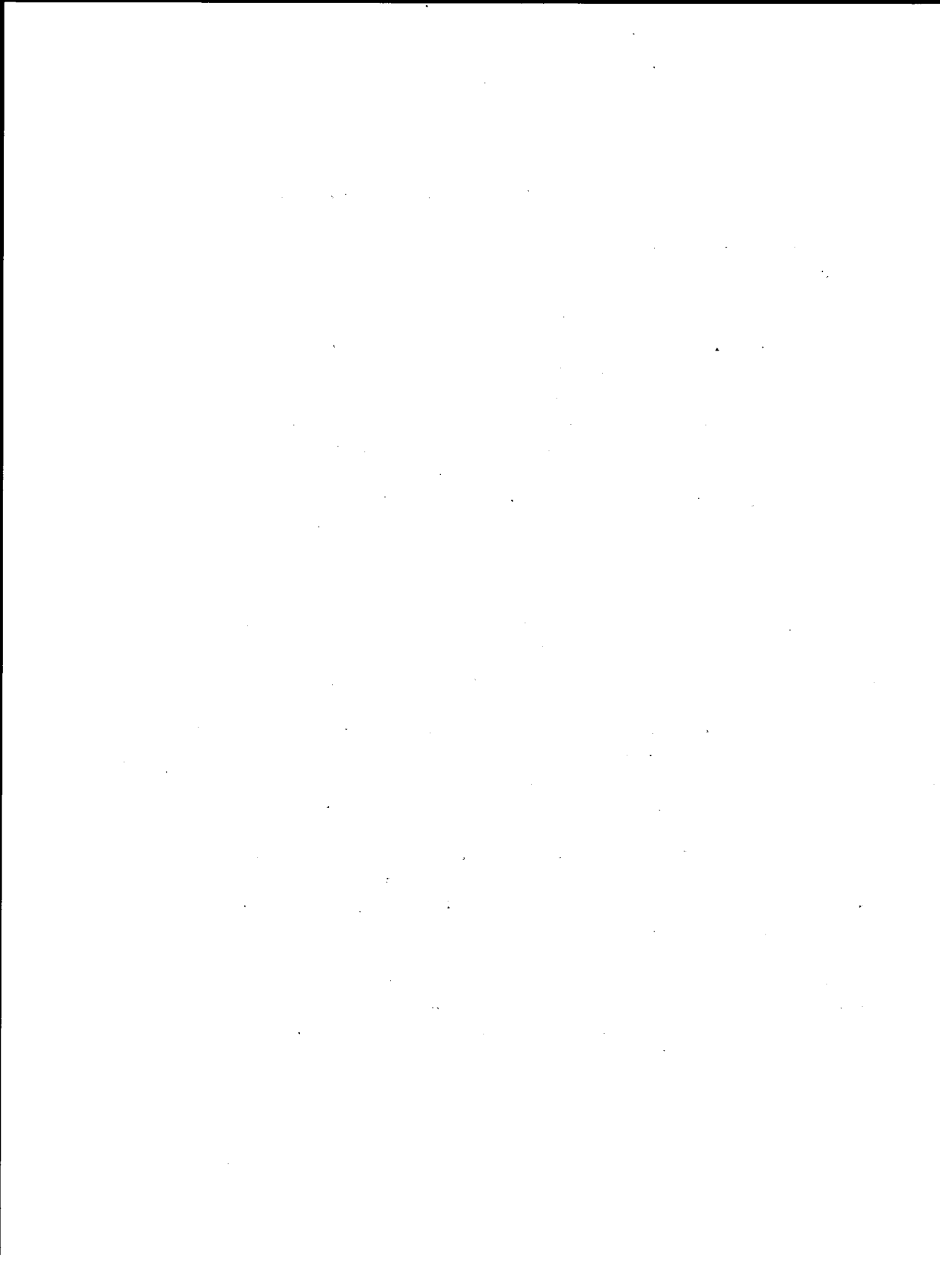


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INTRODUCTION

Massimo Petrocchi, in his *Storia della spiritualità italiana*, has described Catherine of Siena as "the greatest Italian woman writer of piety...insofar as her writings represent the culmination of Dominican, Tuscan, Italian, and even European spirituality."¹ Benedict Hackett, O.S.A., has said of Catherine: "If she was not the greatest woman of the Middle Ages, she was certainly the greatest woman saint and mystic."² Other scholars might quibble over the preeminence which these authors accord to Catherine, yet their remarks illustrate the fact that Catherine's contributions are highly acknowledged by historians in general and especially by historians of spirituality.

Theologians, on the other hand, have been reluctant to recognize Catherine's thought as a theological resource. While they may bolster a particular argument with an incisive quote from Catherine, rarely have they fathomed and appreciated the process of her own theological thought. This may be because her writing style does not fall into conventional theological categories. The frequent use of symbols, found in the writings of Catherine and other medieval women mystics, may seem to lack the clarity of other theological sources. We hope to show that Catherine's approach, even as it relies heavily on the use of symbols, is a true contribution to the task of theology.

We will examine and relate Catherine's thought in two areas, mariology and soteriology. The principal sources will be Catherine's own writings, supplemented by the records of her teachings that were preserved by her disciples. The question may be raised whether the object of such research is solely historical or whether such an undertaking has any relevance for the Church's perception of Mary or salvation in this new millennium. Are Catherine's writings so conditioned by her situation that their value lies principally in being representative pieces of late medieval Italian piety, illustrations of the beliefs of a particular time and culture? Are there any elements which truly speak to the present?

¹ "[L]a più grande scrittrice italiana di pietà, santa Caterina da Siena, in quanto i suoi scritti rappresentano il culmine della spiritualità domenicana toscana ed italiana, ed europea diciamo pure." Massimo Petrocchi, *Storia della spiritualità italiana: (Sec. XIII-XX)* (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1978), 67.

² Benedict Hackett, O.S.A., "Catherine of Siena and William of England: A Curious Partnership," *Proceedings of the PMR Conference: Annual Publication of the International Patristic, Mediaeval and Renaissance Conference* (Villanova, PA: 1980), 29.

It might seem especially improbable that a fourteenth-century lay woman, with no formal education, could add any distinct insights to serious theological discussion at this time. However, shortly after the Second Vatican Council, the Church recognized Catherine as a Doctor of the Church, one of those considered to be authoritative teachers of the faith.

The decision to declare Catherine a Doctor of the Church was initiated by Pope Paul VI, on March 1, 1967, fourteen months after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council. The pope was encouraged to make this proclamation by the commission of theologians after they had worked between 1967 and 1969 to determine whether such a decision was appropriate. In proclaiming Catherine a Doctor within five years of the close of the Council, Pope Paul VI demonstrated his confidence that Catherine's writings accorded with the teachings of this momentous Council. The pope, indeed, illustrated this accord in his homily at the time of the proclamation, when he referred to Catherine's understanding of the papal office as "almost anticipating, not only the doctrine but the language itself of the Second Vatican Council."³

While the pope acknowledged that Catherine does not write with the apologetic vigor and theological boldness of the early Fathers or with the speculative character of the systematic theologians, he was convinced that Catherine made a unique contribution to the Church's rich theological treasury: "What strikes us more in the Saint is the infused wisdom, that is the lucid, profound, and inebriating assimilation of the divine truth and of the mysteries of the faith, contained in the sacred books of the Old and New Testaments: an assimilation, certainly favored by most singular natural gifts, but clearly a prodigious assimilation, due to a charism of wisdom from the Holy Spirit, a mystic charism."⁴

Catherine described her nature as "fire."⁵ Throughout her adult life, that fire was apparent in her passionate desire to proclaim truth in teaching, writing, and

³ "E quasi anticipando, non solo la dottrina, ma il linguaggio stesso del Concilio Vaticano II," Paulus P.P. VI [Giovanni Battista Montini], in "Santa Caterina da Siena proclamata dottore della Chiesa," *Quaderni Cateriniani* 3 (1971): 7.

⁴ "Ciò invece che più colpisce nella Santa è la sapienza infusa, cioè la lucida, profonda ed inebriante assimilazione delle verità divine e dei misteri della fede, contentuti nei Libri Sacri dell'Antico e del Nuovo Testamento: un' assimilazione, favorita, sì, da doti naturali singolarissime, ma evidentemente prodigiosa, dovuta ad un carisma di sapienza dello Spirito Santo, un carisma mistico." *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵ "E quale è la natura mia, amore inestimabile? È il fuoco..." Caterina da Siena, *Le Orazioni*, ed. Giuliana Cavallini (Roma: Edizioni Catheriniane, 1978), *Oratio* XXII, 258. All references to Catherine's prayers will be to this critical text. The numbering of these prayers differs from *The Prayers of Catherine of Siena*, the English translation prepared by Sr. Suzanne Noffke, O.P. However, Noffke provides a table showing the correspondence of the numbering of the prayers. This may be found on page 10 of the 1983 edition and page xxiv of the 2001 edition.

preaching. This may be recognized in Catherine's appeal for prayers, "that God may give me the grace that I always be a lover and a proclaimer of the truth, and for that truth I may die."⁶

While Catherine never made a systematic study of theological truths, her life was an engagement with the truths that theologians study. For her, truth proceeds from God and describes the very nature of God. "First Truth" and "Gentle First Truth" are the names she frequently gives to the Father and to Christ.

For Catherine, one must be grounded in the most basic truth in two principal ways, as she asserts when writing to Giovanna, the tempestuous Queen of Naples:

The first is that we know the truth of God, who loves us inestimably. And He loved us before we were. Indeed through love He created us – this was and is the truth – in order that we might have eternal life and might taste His supreme eternal good. What shows us that in truth it is so? The blood shed for us with such a fire of love.... The second and last is that we ought to know and to see the truth in our neighbor, whether they may be great or small, subjects or lords.⁷

In the saving actions of Jesus on behalf of humanity, God manifested His truth. The fundamental truth, for Catherine, is God's inestimable love for us, proved to

⁶ "...che Dio mi dia grazia che io sia sempre amatrice e annunziatrice della verità, e per essa verità io muoia." S. Caterina da Siena, *Le Lettere di S. Caterina da Siena, ridotte a miglior lezione, e in ordine nuovo disposte con note di Niccolò Tommasèo*, IV, ed. Piero Misciattelli (Firenze: Casa Editrice Marzocco, 1939), Letter 277, 187. This letter to Alessa dei Saracini was written in early May of 1378, while Catherine was attempting to reconcile Florence with the pope. Unless otherwise noted, all the references to Catherine's letters will be to the 1939-1940 Misciattelli edition of Tommasèo. References to Catherine's letters will be identified by the letter number given by Tommasèo, followed by the volume number in the 1939-1940 Misciattelli edition, and the page. Eugenio Duprè Theseider prepared a critical text for eighty-eight letters. These are contained in *Caterina da Siena, Epistolario di Santa Caterina da Siena*, vol. 1, ed. Eugenio Duprè Theseider (Roma: R. Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1940). References with Duprè Theseider's numbering will be given with the initials DT. For English translations of the letters in Duprè Theseider's text, see *The Letters of St. Catherine of Siena*, vol. I, trans. Suzanne Noffke, O.P. (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1988). Noffke differed from Duprè Theseider's chronology of some of the letters in her revision of her first volume in 2000. For the new edition, see *The Letters of St. Catherine of Siena*, vol. I, trans. Suzanne Noffke, O.P. (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000). A second volume of letters appeared in 2001. See *The Letters of St. Catherine of Siena*, vol. II, trans. Suzanne Noffke, O.P. (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001). We can expect the publication of the last two volumes in the near future.

⁷ "El primo è che noi cognosciamo la verità di Dio, il quale ci ama inestimabilmente, e ci amò prima che fossimo; anco, per amore ci creò (questa fu, ed è la verità, perchè noi avessimo vita eterna e gustassimo el suo sommo eterno bene. Che ci manifesta che in verità'sia così? Il sangue sparto per noi con tanto fuoco d'amore.... La seconda, e ultima, è, che noi dobbiamo cognoscere e vedere la verità nel prossimo nostro, o grande o piccolo che sia, o sudditi o signori" (Letter 317, V, 42-43). Catherine wrote this letter between December 5, 1378 and December 15, 1379, to encourage Giovanna to support the cause of the Roman claimant at the start of the Western Schism.

us in the Passion of the Incarnate Christ. Every other teaching of the faith follows from this truth.

When Pope Paul VI proclaimed Saint Catherine of Siena a Doctor of the Church on October 4, 1970, he posed a question:

But what are the characteristic features, the dominant themes of her ascetical and mystical teaching? It seems to us that, in imitation of 'the glorious Paul,' whose vigorous and impetuous style she sometimes reflects, Catherine is the mystic of the Incarnate Word, above all of Jesus Crucified. She exalts the redeeming power of the adorable Blood of the Son of God, poured out on the wood of the Cross with an abundance of love for the salvation of the whole human race.⁸

We will explore Catherine's understanding of Christ's redemptive work but we will also attempt to demonstrate that Catherine's Marian teachings are closely associated with our redemption. We will show that Catherine understood Mary in the context of Jesus' saving actions and that, in Catherine's writings, Mary is portrayed as echoing and cooperating with Jesus' desire for our salvation.

In allowing Catherine to speak for herself, the depth of her thought will become apparent. Until recently, only a portion of Catherine's writings have been known outside of Italy due to the dearth of translations. In particular, most of Catherine's letters, which represent a large portion of her writing, had not been translated into English, depriving English-speaking people of the opportunity of knowing Catherine through her correspondence. Fortunately, in recent years, scholars have been making Catherine's works available through excellent translations. Notable in this regard is the work of Sr. Suzanne Noffke, O.P., who has provided careful English translations of *The Dialogue*, *The Prayers*, and the first two volumes of an eventual four-volume collection of Catherine's *Letters*. Incidents from Catherine's life that were recorded by her disciples will be used to provide a framework to interpret Catherine's writings.

I am using my own translations of Catherine's texts. Since many of the references are from texts and journals not easily accessible in the United States, my own translations will be offered in the text and the original quotation will be given in the notes. In determining the dates of the composition of Catherine's letters, I rely

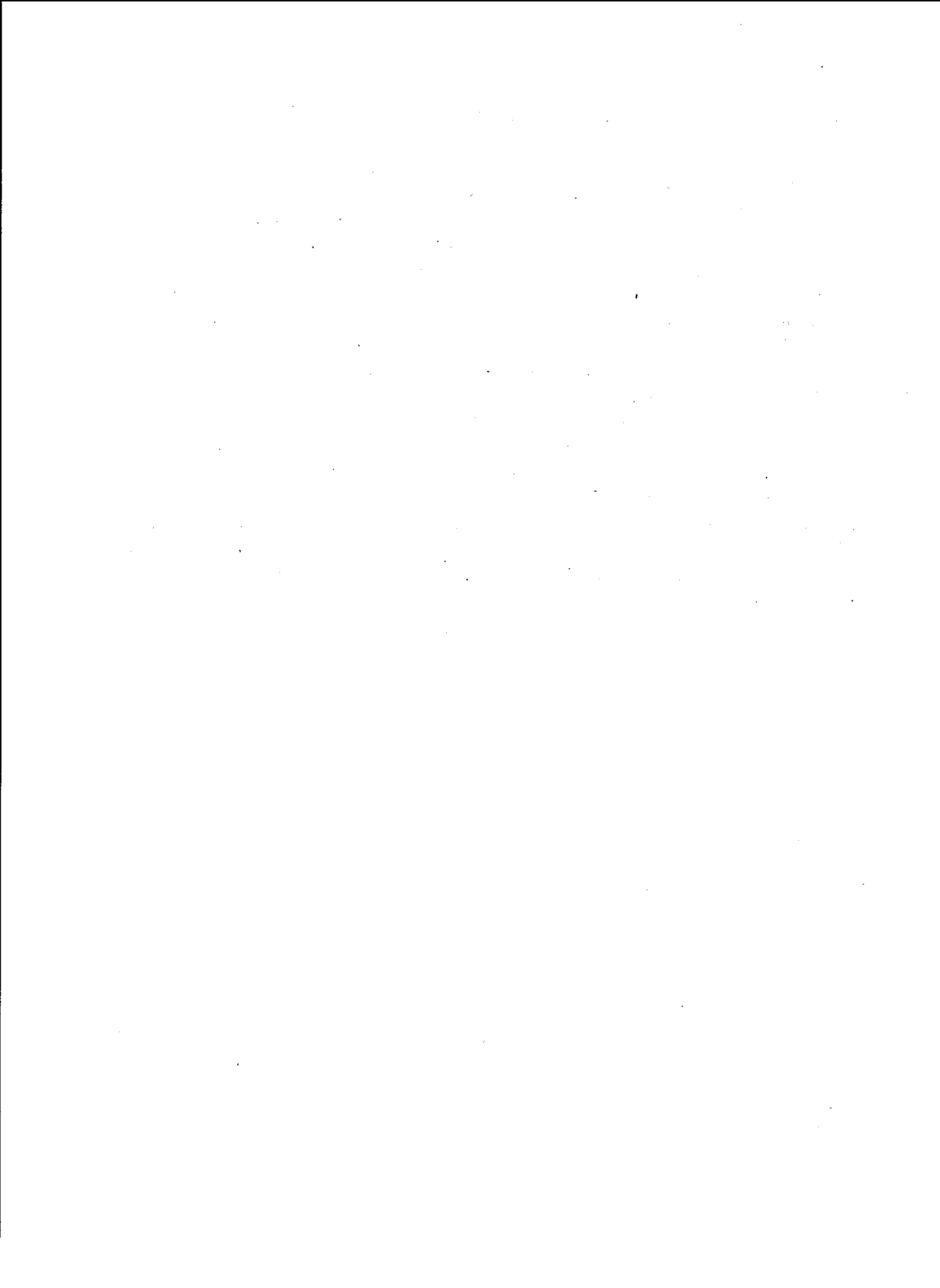
⁸ "Ma quali sono le linee caratteristiche, i temi dominanti del suo magistero ascetico e mistico? A noi sembra che, ad imitazione del 'glorioso Paolo' di cui riflette talvolta anche lo stile gagliardo ed impetuoso, Caterina sia la mistica del Verbo Incarnato, e soprattutto di Cristo Crocifisso; essa fu l'esaltatrice della virtù redentiva del Sangue adorabile del Figliuolo di Dio, effuso sul legno della Croce con larghezza di amore per la salvezza di tutte le umane generazioni." Paulus P.P. VI, "Santa Caterina da Siena proclamata dottore," 7.

on the research of Sr. Suzanne Noffke, O.P., which she has provided me most generously.⁹

I will provide an introductory chapter on Catherine of Siena that will include: the major biographical works composed by her disciples, her life, her writings and their textual history, her style, her sources, as well as the development of Catherinian studies in this century. A second chapter will explicate Catherine's teachings on salvation. This chapter will show the association that Catherine makes between the Father's purpose in creation and Christ's Passion and Death, as well as the transmission of the effects of those saving actions in the Church. The third chapter will examine Mary in the writings and personal experience of Catherine, illustrating that Catherine's teachings on Mary flow from her teachings on the salvific work of Christ and that there is an intimate relationship between her soteriology and her mariology. Since a number of passages that supplement the references used in the text, especially those from Catherine's letters, are not easily available in English, an appendix with fuller Marian passages has been added for chapter three.

A fourth chapter will review the findings of the second and third chapters, emphasizing the relationship between Catherine's mariology and soteriology. Catherine's particular approach to salvation and Mary will be located within the context of Catherine's personal call to lead souls to salvation. The chapter will also illustrate the accord between Catherine's fundamental principles on Mary and salvation and the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar Church.

⁹ We are indebted to Sr. Suzanne Noffke's efforts in establishing the dates for the various letters, despite the inherent difficulties. Catherine's disciples removed elements from the letters which they considered did not pertain to her essential spiritual message, making it difficult, in many instances, to know when the letter was written. The context of some letters indicates the occasions in which they were written. The dating of some letters can also be approximated by comparison with other letters. By analyzing and comparing the linguistic patterns, Sr. Suzanne has been able to estimate the approximate period when other letters were written.



CHAPTER 1

CATHERINE: BIOGRAPHICAL TEXTS, HER LIFE, WRITINGS, STYLE, SOURCES, CATHERINIAN SCHOLARSHIP, AND CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE

Suzanne Noffke, O.P., has written of Catherine of Siena, "I believe it is the integration of life and teaching that gives her teaching its particular authority and power."¹ Catherine's writings are so rooted in her experiences that it is necessary to examine her personal development in order to understand her thought. We are fortunate that several of Catherine's contemporaries saw the importance of recording their recollections of this charismatic woman. Relying on these authors, we can reconstruct with assurance the basic experiences of Catherine's life, recognizing that the authors' interpretations of events were highly influenced by their devotion to her.

The Biographical Sources

The oldest biographical source about Catherine is *I Miracoli di Caterina di Jacopo da Siena*. The text indicates that the anonymous author was present in Florence in May of 1374, when Catherine came to the Dominican General Chapter. This small work, which recounts a number of miraculous incidents of Catherine's life, seems to have been concluded on October 10 of that year. The text is available in the sixth volume of Misciattelli's *Le Lettere*.² The critical Italian text is in the *Fontes vitae S. Catharinae Senensis historici*.³ Francesco Valli, the editor of that collection, remarks that the animated and candid dialogue of *I Miracoli*, a quality unusual in hagiographic works, is indicative of its living oral sources.⁴ There is no English translation of this work.

¹ Suzanne Noffke, O.P., *Catherine of Siena: Vision through a Distant Eye* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 146.

² Anonimo Fiorentino, *Questi sono i miracoli della B. Caterina*, in *Le Lettere di S. Caterina da Siena e di alcuni suoi discepoli*, VI, ed. Piero Misciattelli (Firenze: Casa Editrice Marzocco, 1940), 154-171.

³ Anonimo Fiorentino, *I Miracoli di Caterina di Jacopo da Siena*, ed. Francesco Valli, *Fontes vitae S. Catharinae Senensis historici*, vol. IV, ed. Marie-Hyacinthe Laurent (Siena: R. Università di Siena, 1936).

⁴ "La prosa dell'autore dei *Miracoli* ha una chiarezza tutta fiorentina, è animata da vive battute di dialogo, diverse da quelle della tradizione agiografica, che ricordano l'evidenza delle novelle

The most important biographical sources for the life of Catherine are those composed by her disciples. Eminent among her biographers is her spiritual director, Raimondo delle Vigne, usually identified as Raimondo da Capua.⁵ Raimondo was born around 1330 and entered the Dominican Order in 1347. Raimondo served as a lector of theology at the Dominican priories at Rome, Bologna, and Florence; as rector of the Dominican nuns at Montepulciano; and as prior of the convent of the Minerva in Rome. After Raimondo was appointed Catherine's confessor and director in 1374, he was assigned to the priory of San Domenico in Siena. He remained there until January 1378, when he was again chosen to be the prior of the Minerva.

Raimondo was sent by Pope Urban VI as a Papal Legate to King Charles V of France in December of 1378. Learning that the brother of the antipope planned to assassinate him, Raimondo turned back and remained in Genoa, waiting for instructions from the pope. Catherine gently scolded him for his delay when she wrote to him on July 20, 1379: "If you were not able to walk upright, you might have gone on your hands and knees. If you were not able to go as a friar, you might have gone as a pilgrim. If you had no money there, you might have gone begging."⁶ Nevertheless, the same letter reassured him, quite tenderly, of her love for him.

While at Genoa, Raimondo received the degree of *Magister in Theologia*. He was elected the provincial of Upper Lombardy in late 1379 or early 1380. In May 1380, a month after Catherine's death, at the General Chapter at Bologna, Raimondo was elected the Master of the Order for those provinces which remained bound to Urban VI after the schism.⁷ Raimondo's most significant contribution to the Order was his promotion, with Giovanni Dominici, of the observant movement, which sought to restore the strict observance that had been disrupted by the plagues and civil upheaval. He encouraged this renewal by specifying houses of strict observance within the provinces. He died on October 5, 1399, and was beatified by Leo XIII on May 15, 1899.

sacchettiane, e che si mantengono uguali, qualunque sia la sua fonte orale. E' poco dire 'candido' questo importante libro, che attesta una esperienza letteraria; ricche movenze e un vigore." Francesco Valli, "Il linguaggio dei 'Miracoli di Caterina di Iacopo da Siena' di Anonimo fiorentino," *S. Caterina da Siena*, 15:3-4 (1963): 22.

⁵ Throughout this work I will use the original personal names. However, I will use the English form for Catherine and Popes Gregory XI and Urban VI.

⁶ "E se non poteste andare dritto, fuste andato carpone; se non si poteva andare come frate, fussesi andato come peregrino; se non ci ha denari, fussesi andato per elemosina" (Letter 344, V, 151).

⁷ The allegiance of the provinces followed the lines of the national allegiances. During his time as the Master, Raimondo was often called upon by the popes for diplomatic services.

Raimondo began writing his biography of Catherine in 1385.⁸ This Latin work was completed in 1395, and is known as the *Legenda maior*. Innocenzo Taurisano, O.P., remarks that Raimondo's practice of interrogating the living disciples and then citing their testimony is unique among medieval hagiographers.⁹ One of Raimondo's basic sources was a journal kept by Catherine's earliest confessor, Tommaso dalla Fonte.¹⁰ This journal has been lost. On one occasion, Catherine indicated an awareness of this journal, informing Tommaso that, at three in the morning, he and another Dominican, Bartolomeo Dominici, had been writing: "You were writing the graces that God in His mercy had given to this useless servant."¹¹ There is no critical text for the *Legenda* but the two most recent English translations were made

⁸ Considering his other duties, it was with reluctance that Raimondo undertook this work. Tommaso Caffarini collaborated with Raimondo for a period beginning in early February of 1391. Caffarini seems to have been the one who prodded Raimondo to finish writing, as we see in a letter from Caffarini to Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi, probably in 1391: "Et licet reverendus Magister Ordinis esset multum occupatus, attamen continue quotidie ipsum molestabam offerendo me ad omne adiutorium michi possibile pro expeditione illius legende, propter quod tandem cepimus illam secundam partem nondum perfectam corrigere; deinde ulterius scribere, ipse dictando et ego scribendo. Necdum est perfecta, quare dum dictam secundam partem perficere infra spatium forte quatuor licet sex dierum cogitasset, occurrit quod oportuit, ipsum reverendum Magistrum hinc discedere et Pisas, deinde Romam accedere, et secum omnia deferre.... Attamen dum ipse erit in partibus Italie, bonum erit ipsum modis omnibus molestare, quatenus dictum opus perficiat antequam de Italia discedere ipsum contingat." Frate Tommaso Caffarini al Pagliaresi, *Le Lettere*, VI, ed. Misciattelli, 118-119. Raimondo's work progressed slowly, given his health and his responsibilities as Master of the Order. He tried to be exact in his portrayal, naming his sources at the close of each chapter. For an English summary of the composition of the biography, see Johannes Jorgensen, *Saint Catherine of Siena*, trans. Ingeborg Lund (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1946), 408-9

⁹ "[S]entii il dovere di far conoscere Caterina, scrivendone la mirabile vita, interrogando tutti i discepoli ancora viventi, citando di continuo testimonianze e fonti di informazione; caso unico in tutto il medio evo." Innocenzo Taurisano, O.P., *I Fioretti di Santa Caterina da Siena* (Roma: Libreria Editrice F. Ferrari, 1950), 17.

¹⁰ Frate Tommaso dalla Fonte seems to have been Catherine's cousin and to have been brought up in Catherine's home after the death of his parents in the plague of 1348. Tommaso was a novice at San Domenico in 1357-1358. He died on August 22, 1390. His work has been lost but it was used by Raimondo and later by Caffarini in his *Libellus de Supplemento*. In an attempt to illustrate the effectiveness of God's grace in directing Catherine through a humble instrument, Caffarini may be exaggerating when he says that Tommaso was barely literate: "Hic autem cum intrasset magnus in ordine et rudis, numquam ex tunc fuit frater litteratus, quinimmo nec scribere sciebat, nec bene legere...." Tommaso di Antonio da Siena [Thomas Antonii de Seni/Tommaso di Antonio da Siena], *Libellus de Supplemento legende proluxe Virginis Beate Catherine de Senis*, ed. Iuliana Cavallini, Imelda Foralosso (Roma: Edizioni Cateriniane, 1974), III, vi, 377. Our references to the *Libellus de Supplemento* will provide the part (*pars*) of the book in large roman numerals, the tract (*tractatus*) in small roman numerals, and the page of the Cavallini/Foralosso edition.

¹¹ "Scribebatis gratias quas Deus, per suam misericordiam, fecit isti serve inutili." *Ibid.*, II, v, 72.

from the text found in the *Acta Sanctorum Aprilis Tomus III*.¹² The Bollandists first printed this text in 1675.

An English translation of parts of the *Legenda* was printed in 1493, as *The lyf of Saint Katherin of Senis the blessed virgin*. Edmund Gardner reports that this work: "contains only certain portions of it, freely rendered, with considerable omissions."¹³ Ambrosius Catharinus (Archbishop Lancelot Politi) (1484-1553) composed a popular abridged edition of the *Legenda* in Italian which was translated into English in 1609 by Father John Fen, the confessor of the English Augustinian nuns at Louvain. In 1860, the Ladies of the Sacred Heart produced an English translation of the *Legenda* based on Eduard Cartier's 1853 French version of the *Legenda*. For a century, this work remained the only available English text. In 1960, George Lamb made an English translation, relying on the Bollandist text as well as the 1934 Italian translation of Guiseppe Tinagli, O.P. In 1980, Conleth Kearns, O.P., an Irish Dominican, did a new translation based on the Latin text of the Bollandists.

A major figure in promoting Catherine's writings and cause was Tommaso d'Antonio da Siena, frequently called by his family name of Caffarini.¹⁴ The Dominican scholar, Marie-Hyacinthe Laurent, O.P., asserts: "After her death, he always showed himself to be the greatest promoter of her cult."¹⁵ Tommaso was born in Siena in 1350, and entered the Order at San Domenico in 1364. He seems to have first met Catherine while he was a very young religious. His assignment to San Domenico in Siena enabled him to work closely with Catherine. After her death, Caffarini was a lector of theology at Genoa. He greatly assisted Raimondo da Capua in establishing the reform movement in the Order. Returning from the Holy Land in 1391, he went to the reformed priory of SS. Giovanni e Paolo in Venice, where he was prior from 1409 to 1411. Under his leadership the priory became a center for promoting interest in Catherine's cause. Caffarini also served as prior of San Domenico in Castello from 1414 to 1422. He died in Venice in 1434 at the age of 84.

The priory in Venice initiated an annual celebration of the anniversary of Catherine's death on the Sunday after April 29, then the feast of St. Peter Martyr, the day on which Catherine had died. In 1411, Francesco Bembo, Bishop of Castello and the legate of the Holy See, requested some justification for this public homage to an uncanonized person. Caffarini and Frate Bartolomeo da Ferrara prepared a

¹² St. Catherine of Siena is found under the date of April 30, the former feast day of the saint.

¹³ Edmund G. Gardner, *Saint Catherine of Siena: A Study in the Religion, Literature, and History of the Fourteenth Century in Italy* (New York: Dutton, 1907), ix.

¹⁴ Tommaso is at times referred to as Tommaso Nacci da Siena. "Nacci" is a familiar form of Antonnaci, a diminutive of Antonio.

¹⁵ "Dopo la di lei morte sempre si dimostrò il più grande promotore del suo culto." Marie-Hyacinthe Laurent, introduction to *Processo Castellano*, ed. M. H. Laurent, O.P., *Fontes vitae S. Catharinae Senensis historici*, vol. IX (Milano: Bocca, 1942), xv.

written testimony on Catherine's virtues and doctrine and also sought depositions from others, using a notary, Francesco de Viviano, to record the testimonies. By the time the work was completed in 1416, depositions had been obtained from twenty-four witnesses, twenty-two of whom were religious. Eight of these were Dominicans. Others were Carthusians, Benedictines, Cistercians, and Franciscans. Laurent notes that all of the religious were associated with the reform movements in their Orders.¹⁶ A critical text of the process, *Il Processo Castellano*, was published in 1942, under the direction of Laurent. An English translation of some of the depositions may be found in the appendix to the English version of Cartier's translation of Raimondo's *Vita*.

In 1400 and again in 1401, the Camaldolese prior of the Convent of S. Maria degli Angeli at Florence wrote to Caffarini requesting him to provide his monks with more detailed information about Catherine. A third letter from the Carthusian general spurred Caffarini to develop a work meant to supplement Raimondo's *Legenda*. This was the *Libellus de Supplemento, legende prolixæ Virginis Beate Catherine de Senis*. It is usually referred to as *Libellus de Supplemento* or the *Supplementum*.

Caffarini explains that he drew from the journal of Tommaso dalla Fonte and also from the recollections of Bartolomeo Dominici: "All the above, I had from certain written journals principally through the hands of her first confessor, Tommaso dalla Fonte, and also through the hands of the second confessor of the same virgin, who is called Frate Bartolomeo Dominici, who afterwards was a professor of sacred theology. Both were from Siena."¹⁷ The first part of the work was done between 1402 and 1411. The second part appears to have been composed between 1411 and 1417 because it makes reference to the testimonies in the *Processus*. In the section completed after the outset of the *Processus*, the text shows a more aggressive effort to advance Catherine's canonization. Emilia De Sanctis Rosmini remarks: "Thus the purpose of Caffarini's writing is to complement the *Legenda maior*. But Caffarini here adds to his account, although he does not say so, a new intention, to support the testimonies of the *Processus* with different information and to give a more vigorous push to the cause for which he strove."¹⁸ A critical text of the *Libellus de Supplemento* was published by the Edizioni Cateriniane in Rome in 1974.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, xi-xiv.

¹⁷ "Omnia autem supradicta ego habui ex certis quaternis scriptis per manus principaliter primi confessoris qui dictus est frater Thomas de Fonte, et etiam per manus secundi confessoris ipsius virginis qui appellatus est frater Bartholomeus Dominici, qui fuit postmodum sacre theologie professor. Et ambo fuerunt de Senis." Thomas Antonii De Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, vi, 116.

¹⁸ "Lo scopo dello scritto del Caffarini è dunque di complemento della Leggenda Maggiore. Ma il Caffarini vi aggiunge per conto suo, per quanto non lo dica, un' intenzione nuova: quella di confrontare con alcune notizie diverse le testimonianze del 'Processus,' e dare più vigorosa spinta alla

Caffarini also wrote an abbreviated version of Raimondo's biography. This was known as the *Legenda minor*. Caffarini's first Latin version of the work was made between 1412 and 1413 and the second version between 1413 and 1414. Stefano Maconi made an Italian translation of the first version.

There has been some discussion on whether Catherine's biographers have over-emphasized the miraculous and the extraordinary, following the hagiographic practice of the time in order to promote her canonization. This accent on the unusual and extraordinary may, in contemporary times, be an obstacle to understanding Catherine's message. Giovanni Getto, in his *Letteratura religiosa del Trecento*, has observed that the figure of the saint should be kept free not only from flowery rhetoric but even from an emphasis on the multitude of miraculous deeds which could serve to suffocate Catherine's spirituality. He stresses: "In reality what was truly supernatural in Saint Catherine was accomplished by her interior experience and not by the marvels that enveloped her external life. The true miracle is in her soul and not in her physical existence."¹⁹

Catherine's Life

Catherine was born on the medieval Siense New Year's Day, March 25, 1347, the younger of twin girls and the twenty-fourth child of Lapa di Puccio di Piacenti and Giacomo di Benincasa, in the Tuscan republic of Siena. Giacomo was a dyer of woolen cloth, who was able to provide a comfortable life for his large family. Their home was located a short distance down the hill from the Dominican Church of San Domenico.

Even as a child, Catherine was intensely conscious of God. Her piety was benignly tolerated until, as a young adolescent, her ideas began to conflict with her family's expectations. To frustrate her family's attempts to arrange a marriage for her, Catherine clipped off her hair. In reaction, Giacomo determined to break her will by making her the servant of the large family, but Catherine's generosity through a year of humble service convinced him that her unusual vocation was gen-

causa per la quale combatte." Emilia De Sanctis Rosmini, "Il Supplementum di Tommaso di Nacci Caffarini," *Studi Cateriniani* 5 (1928): 24.

¹⁹ "La figura della santa deve essere liberata non solo dalla frondosa retorica fiorita intorno a questo elemento paesistico, ma anche da quel complesso di fatti straordinari e miracolosi che soffocano e impediscono la chiara visione della sua spiritualità.... E in effetti la vera sovranaturalità in santa Caterina è costituita dalla sua esperienza interiore, e non dal meraviglioso che avvolge la sua vita esterna. Il vero miracolo è nella sua anima, e non nella sua materiale esistenza." Giovanni Getto, *Letteratura religiosa del Trecento* (Firenze: G.C. Sansoni, 1967), 120.

uine. She was given a small room below the kitchen, where she could live and pray undisturbed.

When she was about eighteen, Catherine was admitted as a member of the third-order lay Dominican women in Siena, known as the *Mantellate*. Contrary to the customary depiction in religious art of Catherine in the full Dominican habit including the scapular, Catherine would have worn the habit of the *Mantellate* which consisted of a tunic, a white veil and the black mantle, from which the name *Mantellate* came.²⁰ The *Mantellate*, most of whom were widows, continued to live in their own homes, gathered daily for Mass and prayers at San Domenico, and engaged in works of charity, particularly the care of the sick.

After becoming a Dominican, Catherine secluded herself in her small room for three years, barely eating or sleeping; praying intensely, at times being tormented by obscene temptations, and at times being consoled by comforting apparitions. On the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, 1368, Catherine experienced a mystical espousal with Christ. After this experience, Christ instructed her that she must love not only Him but also her neighbor: "I want you to fulfill the justice of these precepts, that you may walk not only with one but two feet, that you may fly with two wings to heaven."²¹

Catherine's disciples would later recall the stories of her many works of mercy, such as: Catherine's care for the victims of the plague that took the lives of a third of the city²²; her insistence on providing good wine for the poor as she drew from a keg which seemed never to empty²³; her giving her own tunic to a beggar²⁴; her crawling home after bringing food and wine to a starving family when she was sick²⁵; her family members' locking their possessions away to protect them from her generosity²⁶; her nursing those with cancer, particularly a woman who slandered

²⁰ Lidia Bianchi, "Il carattere dottrinale della santità di Caterina da Siena nella iconografia del primo Quattrocento," in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di studi cateriniani, Siena-Roma, 24-29 aprile 1980* (Roma: Curia Generalizia O.P., 1981), 580.

²¹ "Volo te horum praeceptorum justitiam adimplere, ut non uno, sed duobus pedibus ambules, duabusque alis voles ad coelum." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis, Aprilis Tomus Tertius Acta Sanctorum*, v.12, ed. Godefrido Henschenio et Daniele Papebrochio (Parisii et Romae: Victorem Palmé, 1866), II, cxxi, 892. The references to Raimondo's *Vita* will give the part of the book, the paragraph number, and the page in the *Acta Sanctorum*. Conleth Kearns's translation retains the same part and paragraph numbering.

²² Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, II, ccxlv-cclvi, 923-926.

²³ *Ibid.*, II, cxl, 897.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, II, cxxxv, 896.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, II, cxxxii, 895.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, II, cxxxvi, 896.

her moral character²⁷; and her holding the head of a man as he was beheaded to sustain him in his confidence in God.²⁸

Catherine's charisma attracted a band of disciples, a diverse group which included other *Mantellate*,²⁹ lay women and men,³⁰ Dominican friars from San Domenico,³¹ as well as Augustinians and Franciscans. In May of 1374, the Master of the Dominican Order, on the occasion of the General Chapter in Florence, placed her under the direction of Frate Raimondo delle Vigne da Capua, whom Catherine would describe as, "father and son given to me by this sweet mother Mary."³²

Clement V, a French pope dominated by Philip IV, had moved the papacy to Avignon in 1305. The lack of the papal presence in Italy and the resulting misrule of the Papal States aggravated the resistance of the Italian cities against the temporal authority of the Church. In 1376, Gregory XI placed Florence under an interdict in retaliation for instigating a series of revolts against his agents.

In the first of her surviving letters to the pope, Catherine identified the bad administrators as the reason for the rebellion and appealed to the pope to return to Rome, despite his feelings for his family.³³ In the Spring of 1376, Catherine went to Avignon to plead for peace at the request of members of the *Signoria* of Florence. Her efforts were obstructed by the obstinacy of the Florentine ambassadors themselves. She was more successful in encouraging Gregory to follow through on his wavering resolve to return the papacy to Rome.

Catherine's letters to Gregory XI and his successor Urban VI are respectful and even affectionate, as she addresses the popes as both "Christ on earth"³⁴ and

²⁷ *Ibid.*, II, clviii, 901-902.

²⁸ The account of the death of Niccolò di Toldo may be found in Catherine's letter to Raimondo, Letter 273, IV, 173-178.

²⁹ Among those closest to her were Alessa dei Saracini and Francesca (Cecca) Gori, widows who had given their money to the poor. Catherine often stayed at Alessa's home. Cecca had three sons who were Dominican friars.

³⁰ Some of the young men who were drawn to Catherine's company served as her secretaries. These men preserved her writings.

³¹ Among the Dominicans were: Frate Tommaso dalla Fonte, who was Catherine's first director; Frate Tommaso d'Antonio da Siena (Caffarini), who was a novice at San Domenico when he first met Catherine; and Frate Bartolomeo Dominici, who frequently acted as Catherine's confessor.

³² "Padre e figliuolo dato da quella dolce madre Maria" (Letter 373, V, 290). This letter was written on February 15, 1380, two and a half months before she died.

³³ See Letter 185, III, 122-129.

³⁴ See, for instance, her letters at the time of the schism, such as Letter 356 to three spiritual women of Naples, and Letter 357 to the King of Hungary.

"*Babbo*"³⁵ or "Daddy." Nevertheless, she was unequivocally explicit on the need for reform in the Church, beginning with the papal court and did not hesitate to call the pope to "act as man" and to have a "manly heart"³⁶ to bring about this reform. She appealed to the ministers of the Church to live in accord with truth. Thus she challenged Gregory XI: "If until now you have not really stayed firm in truth, I wish and I pray that you do so, for this period of time which remains for us, manfully and as a manly man, following Christ of whom you are the vicar."³⁷ She would remind Pope Urban VI that God wanted him to be His representative not only in external authority but especially in an internal conformity to Truth: "This Eternal Truth wants to make of you another Him."³⁸

On September 13, 1376, Pope Gregory set out by sea for Genoa and made a solemn entrance into Rome on January 13, 1377. Upon the pope's return, Catherine spent the first months of 1377 establishing an enclosed monastery of nuns, Santa Maria degli Angeli, at the castle in Belcaro, which had been given to her by Nanni di Ser Vanni. She lived most of that year in Val d'Orcia, the countryside about twenty miles from Siena, preaching, counseling, and attempting to bring peace among the feuding families.

In December of 1377, Gregory XI asked Catherine to go to Florence to promote reconciliation between that city and himself. While there, Catherine was attacked and almost stabbed by a mob who opposed the pope's terms, considering Catherine to be an agent of the Guelph party. On April 8, 1378, after the death of Gregory, the Archbishop of Bari, Bartolomeo Prignano, was elected pope, taking the name of Urban VI. When peace was established between the pope and Florence, Catherine returned to Siena in late July or early August. There, in October 1378, she completed her book, *Il Dialogo*, which she had begun in the autumn of 1377.

³⁵ See, for instance, Catherine's letters to Gregory XI, Letter 185 of January 1376, and Letter 209 possibly written shortly after February 3, 1377, or her letters to Urban VI, Letter 291 written between June 23 and 30, 1378, and Letter 364, which was written between January 1 and 5, 1380.

³⁶ Catherine's meaning for the word "virile" presents a difficulty to translators because ironically Catherine herself is the best example of the expression. Noffke explains the difficulties this presents for the translator: "But there are ways in which Catherine was, in tune with her age, glaringly sexist in her attitudes, and though I have translated, for example her *virilmente* (legitimately) as 'courageously,' for her the word definitely carried overtones of 'manliness' as such." Suzanne Noffke, O.P., introduction to *Catherine of Siena: The Dialogue*, trans. Suzanne Noffke, O.P. (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 21.

³⁷ "E se per infino a qui non ci fusse stato bene fermo in verità, voglio e prego che si facci, questo punto del tempo che c'è rimaso, virilmente e come uomo virile, seguitando Cristo, di cui vicario sete" (Letter 185, III, 127). Noffke sets a date for this letter as January of 1376.

³⁸ "[Q]uesta Verità eterna voglia fare di voi un altro lui..." (Letter 346, V, 162). Noffke believes that this letter was written between December 20 and 31, 1378.

Pope Urban's harsh attempts at reform alienated a number of the cardinals, who had been appointed by his predecessors in Avignon. These cardinals withdrew from the papal court and on September 20, 1378, elected Cardinal Robert of Geneva as pope. He assumed the name of Clement VII, thus initiating the Western Schism.³⁹

In November, Urban asked Catherine to come to Rome to work for peace in the Church. Arriving in Rome on November 28, she was received by the pope two days later and presented to the cardinals. During the next year, she labored for the pope's cause, especially through her letters, even though her health was deteriorating. As the Roman population grew rebellious against the severe pontiff, Catherine felt an even greater responsibility to pray for the unity of the Church. Each day she dragged herself from her home near the Minerva to the old basilica of St. Peter's to spend her days interceding for the Church, frequently praying by Giotto's mosaic of the *Navicella*, the ship of Peter.⁴⁰

She describes this daily intercession in a letter to Raimondo da Capua:

I pray the divine Goodness, that He would soon let me see the redemption of His people. When it is the hour of Terce, I get up from the Mass, and you would see a dead woman walking to St. Peter's. And I enter again to labor in the ship of the holy Church. There I stay until near the hour of Vespers, and from that place I would not want to leave either day or night until I see this people strengthened and bonded with their father.⁴¹

³⁹ The schismatic cardinals alleged that they did not have the necessary freedom during the conclave because of the Roman crowds who were demanding a Roman pope. In her letters, Catherine challenged this claim, since during the conclave the cardinals had made a pretense of electing a Roman by presenting to the crowd the elderly cardinal of San Pietro and only then proceeded to elect Urban, who was Italian but not Roman. Catherine noted that the cardinals had not only publicly revered Urban as pope but had even asked him for special favors, which favors, she pointed out, they continued to hold. She wrote an especially stinging letter to three Italian cardinals who had abandoned the pope's cause, concluding her arguments with the assertion, "Speaking humanly, I do not see the reason, Christ on earth being Italian and you Italians, that the passion of your native land was not able to move you." "[M]a, parlando umanamente, Cristo in terra italiano, e voi Italiani, che non vi poteva muovere la passione della patria...." (Letter 310, IV, 305-306). Noffke places this letter between September 22 and 30, 1378.

⁴⁰ Paul VI makes mention of Catherine's prayer at this mosaic: "Estenuata di forze, e vinta dal digiuno e dalla malattia, veniva ogni giorno a S. Pietro, nella sua antica costruzione, la quale aveva nell'atrio un giardino, sulla facciata un mosaico famoso, eseguito da Giotto per il giubileo del 1300, e chiamato la navicella (ora figura all'interno dell'atrio della nuova Basilica) che riproduceva la scena della barca di Pietro, squassata dalla tempesta notturna, e raffigurava l'apostolo che osa andare incontro a Cristo apparso camminante sulle onde; simbolo della vita sempre pericolante e sempre miracolosamente salvata dal divino misterioso Maestro." Paolo VI, "L'Amore della Chiesa, Nota dominante della vita di Santa Caterina da Siena," *S. Caterina da Siena* XX, n.2 (1969): 51-52.

⁴¹ "Prego la divina Bontà, che tosto mi lassì vedere la redenzione del popolo suo. Quando egli è l'ora della terza, e io mi levo dalla messa, e voi vedreste andare una morta a Santo Pietro; ed entro di

On Sexagesima Sunday, January 29, 1380, Catherine had a vision in which she experienced Christ placing the bark of the Church upon her shoulders. She predicted her death, telling her disciples: "I have given my life for Holy Church."⁴² After late February of 1380, she was no longer able to walk. She died two months later, on April 29. Her body was buried at Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome, where it now rests under the main altar. Her head was brought by Raimondo to the Church of San Domenico in Siena in October of 1383. She was canonized by the Sienese pope, Pius II, with the bull, *Misericordias Domini*, on June 29, 1461.

Considering that Catherine did not have power, nor wealth, nor learning, nor any position in society, the respect she was able to command is quite remarkable. Kenelm Foster has observed: "She was a woman, she was young, she was not of noble birth, she had never been to school, she was not even a nun; the wonder is not that her position, depending as it did entirely on her personality, aroused opposition, but that it aroused so little."⁴³

Certainly the society itself was especially receptive to visionaries and poets. St. Bridget of Sweden, who died in 1373, had prodded the popes to return to Rome and to reform the Church. Both Dante and Petrarch had also sounded the call for reform in the Church earlier in the century. Ultimately, it was the truthfulness of Catherine's words and her life that were the source of her credibility, aided, no doubt, by her fiery intensity. The word she frequently used in her letters, *Voglio*, "I will" or "I want," evokes the powerful determination of this woman when she was convinced that a course of action was God's will.⁴⁴

Catherine's Writings

Catherine's writings consist of a book, letters, and a collection of prayers. The extent to which Catherine was able to read and write is not known. According to Raimondo, after her unsuccessful attempts to study Latin in order to pray the Office, Catherine received the gift of reading through prayer. This probably happened

nuovo a lavorare nella navicella della santa Chiesa. Ine mi sto cosi infino presso all'ora del vespero; e di quello luogo non vorrei escire nè di nè notte, infino che io non veggo un poco fermato e stabilito questo popolo col padre loro" (Letter 373, V, 289). Noffke gives the date of this letter as February 15, 1380.

⁴² "Ego vitam dedi pro sancta Ecclesia." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, III, ccclxiii, 953.

⁴³ Kenelm Foster, O.P., "The Spirit of St. Catherine of Siena," *Life of the Spirit* 15 (April 1961): 436.

⁴⁴ Noffke writes: "It is in the extremity of her brokenness very shortly before her death, when she finally surrendered even that certainty about God's will that had so characterized her spirituality and her teaching up to then, that Catherine's life and words blossomed into the treasury of integrity and integration that she is for us today." Noffke, *Catherine of Siena*, 63.

in 1366, when she was nineteen. Raimondo informs us: "Before she rose from prayer, she was so divinely instructed that, after she rose from the prayer, she knew how to read every word as quickly and easily as someone most skilled. When I witnessed this myself, I was amazed, principally for this reason: I found that when she was reading most quickly, if she were told to read in syllables, she did not know what to say. Indeed, she scarcely recognized the letters."⁴⁵ *I Miracoli* describes the reading of spiritual books as a daily practice: "All the rest of the day... she spends either in teaching people to follow the way of God, or in contemplation in an enraptured state, or in reading holy books."⁴⁶

It was towards the close of her life that she began to write. In her letter to Raimondo in October of 1377, she explains that she has received the gift of writing:

This letter and another which I sent you, I have written with my hand upon the Isola della Rocca...His Providence which abounded towards me...has given me and provided to give me the aptitude of writing, in order that, descending from the height, I might have someone with whom to unburden my heart that it might not burst...As soon as you left me, as one sleeping, I began to learn with the glorious evangelist John and Thomas Aquinas.⁴⁷

Caffarini in his deposition in the *Processus* refers to Catherine's writing in an almost offhanded way, "whether speaking or writing or praying,"⁴⁸ which might suggest that her friends had become accustomed to her ability to write, although Caffarini may be considering her dictated letters, as well.

II Dialogo

In Letter 272, which is dated October 4, 1377, while she was staying in Val d'Orcia, Catherine describes to Raimondo a particularly vivid vision of Christ as

⁴⁵ "Antequam de oratione surgeret, ita divinitus est edocta, quod postquam ab ipsa surrexit, omnem scivit litteram legere tam velociter et expedite, sicut quicumque doctissimus. Quod ego ipse dum fui expertus, stupebam: potissime propter hoc, quod inveni, quia cum velocissime legeret, si jubebatur syllabicare, in nullo sciebat aliquid dicere: imo vix litteras cognoscebat." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, I, cxliii, 890.

⁴⁶ "Tutto l'altro tempo del di... ispende o in amaestrare genti di seguire la via di Dio, o in contemplare, o in stare rapita... o in leggere libri santi." Anonimo Fiorentino, *I Miracoli, Fontes vitae*, vol. IV, 9.

⁴⁷ "Questa lettera, e un'altra ch' io vi mandai, ho scritte di mia mano in su l'Isola della Rocca...e la sua Providenzia; la quale abondava verso di me... m'aveva dato, e proveduto con darmi l'attitudine dello scrivere; acciocchè discendendo dall'altezza, avessi un poco con chi sfogare 'l cuore, perchè non scoppiasse.... Onde, subito che fuste partito da me col glorioso evangelista Joanni e Tommaso di Aquino, così dormendo cominciai ad imparare" (Letter 272, IV, 172). Noffke places this letter on October 10 or shortly afterwards, 1377.

⁴⁸ "Sive loquendo sive scribendo sive orando..." *Processo Castellano*, 118.

the bridge to God. This letter contains in itself the nucleus of her book, *Il Dialogo*, being similarly constructed around her four petitions with God's answers.⁴⁹

Determining exactly when Catherine dictated her book presents difficulties, but the witness of her contemporaries helps to give an approximate time. Caffarini, in his *Legenda minor*, states that Catherine was involved with the work about two years before she died⁵⁰ and that she finished it before she went to Rome.⁵¹ Two references in Catherine's letters offer additional clues. In May 1378, she writes from Florence to a disciple, Stefano di Corrado Maconi: "I sent to the Countess to ask for my book. And I have waited many days for it and it has not come. And so if you go there, tell her to send it immediately, and order whoever goes there, to tell her and not to forget it."⁵² It seems that having left Florence quickly, she left the book behind. Thus, while writing to her friends in Florence, Francesco and Agnesa Di Pipino, in August of 1378, she asks: "Give the book and the privileges to Francesca because I want to write something in it."⁵³ Caffarini attests that, after she returned from Florence, Catherine composed part of the book at the hermitage of Frate Santi, outside of Siena.⁵⁴ The fact that the schism is not referred to indicates that the book was finished before she went to Rome. Two codices give the date of the completion as October of 1378.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Dupré Theseider sees the ideas of *The Dialogue* also reflected in Letters 64 and 65. See Eugenio Dupré Theseider, "Sulla composizione del Dialogo di Santa Caterina da Siena," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 117 (1941): 188-197.

⁵⁰ "Unde circa biennium ante transitum eius, tanta claritas veritatis ei divinitus aperta fuit, ut librum...coacia componeret et in tempore brevi perficeret." Tommaso di Antonio da Siena [Tommaso Nacci Caffarini], *Sanctae Catharinae Senensis legenda minor*, ed. E. Franceschini, *Fontes Vitae S. Catharinae Senensis historici*, vol. X (Milano: Bocca, 1942), 158.

⁵¹ "[S]ed etiam dictamini cuiusdam libri se dedit, pluribus scriptoribus ore virgineo dictando, et illum usque ad finem explendo, non virtute naturali sed iuxta Sancti Spiritus unctionem. Post hec vero, de precepto dicti Urbani sexti consequenter oportuit virginem...ad Urbem accedere." *Ibid.*, 148.

⁵² "Mandai a chiedere alla Contessa il libro mio; e hollo aspettato parecchi di: e non viene. E però se tu vai là, di che 'l mandi subito: e tu ordina che chi vi va, il dica, e non manchi" (Letter 365, V, 257). The Countess would be Bandedè de' Salimbeni with whom Catherine had stayed at Rocca d'Orcia. Noffke locates this letter between May 25 and June 20, 1378.

⁵³ "Date a Francesco el libro e li privilegii, perchè vi voglio scrivere alcuna cosa" (Letter 179, III, 98).

⁵⁴ "In his hermitage, set close to the city of Siena...as if totally snatched from her senses, she composed part of her book. At that very place, it fortunately happened that she completed the book, spoken of before, even to its end." "[Q]uod in eius heremitorio iuxta civitatem Senarum constituo...quasi a sensibus totaliter rapta, partem sui libri composuit, ibidemque, si bene occurrit, totum prefatum librum ad finem usque perduxit." Tommaso di Antonio da Siena, *Libellus de Supplemento*, III, vi, 389-390.

⁵⁵ See Luisa Aurigemma, "La tradizione manoscritta del *Dialogo della Divina Provvidenza* di Santa Caterina da Siena," *Critica letteraria* 26, fasc. II, n. 59 (1988): 237.

Giuliana Cavallini, who has prepared the critical text of *Il Dialogo*, observes that the book was probably composed over a period of time, with periodic additions without losing the unity of the document.⁵⁶ Caffarini, in his deposition for the *Processus*, describes how Catherine would resume work on her book after interruptions:

Concerning the composition of her book there is clearly, among others, this wonderful thing, when many days passed for emergency situations, in which she was not able to continue dictating, when, after that time a suitable occasion was given to her, she resumed where she had left off, as if no interval or interruption had in any way occurred to her. Above all, as appears evident in the discourse of her book, after she had spoken for many pages, she summarized or reiterated the principal intent, both what was said and what she had been saying, just as and in fact they were, equally and actually present in her mind.⁵⁷

Raimondo indicates that Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi,⁵⁸ Stefano Maconi,⁵⁹ and Barduccio di Piero Canigiani⁶⁰ were the secretaries who worked with Catherine on its composition.⁶¹ Raimondo also gives us a description of the composition of the book:

The peace, then, having been publicized, she went back to her own area, and directed herself diligently to the writing of her book, which, inspired by the Holy

⁵⁶ "Da essa risulta che il Libro non fu composto in pochi giorni, tutto di un fiato, per così dire, ma in uno spazio di tempo abbastanza esteso, e che da un nucleo fondamentale si arricchì per successivi ampliamenti, senza perdere, anzi rinsaldando, la sua unità." Giuliana Cavallini, introduzione, Caterina da Siena, *Il Dialogo della Divina Provvidenza ovvero Libro della Divina Dottrina*, ed. Giuliana Cavallini (Siena: edizioni Cantagalli, 1995), xxx.

⁵⁷ "[C]irca libri sui compositionem inter alia hoc mirabile, videlicet quod cum ex emergentibus causis transirent plures dies, in quibus sibi ad dictandum procedere non liceret, concesso sibi tamen apto postmodum tempore, ita ubi dimiserat resumebat ac si nullum intervallum aut intermissio sibi fieret quomodolibet occurrisset. Insuper ut in decursu libri sui evidenter apparet, postquam etiam aliquando per plures cartas dictavit, ita tamen principale intentum resumit sive epilogat ac si tam dicta quam dicenda fuissent, sicut et de facto erant, pariter et actualiter presentia menti sue." *Il Processo Castellano*, 51.

⁵⁸ Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi was a member of a Siennese noble family who became a disciple of Catherine in 1370. He was a lover of poetry and was given to bouts of depression. After her death, he lived as a hermit, dying in 1406.

⁵⁹ Stefano Maconi was born the same year as Catherine. In 1381, after Catherine's death, he became a Carthusian and was elected the Master General of the Order in 1398. He died in 1424.

⁶⁰ Barduccio di Piero Canigiani came under Catherine's influence when she was in Florence in 1378. He was with her during the last two years of her life, serving as her secretary especially when she was in Rome. After her death he was ordained but died in 1382.

⁶¹ "Neri (Ranieri) di Pagliaresi of Siena...was one with the aforementioned Stefano and Barduccio, writers both of the letters and of her book." "Nerius seu Rainerius de Pagla de Senis.... Hic fuit una cum praedicto Stephano et Barduccio scriptoribus tam epistolarum quam libri ejus." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, III, cccxliii, 948.

Spirit, she dictated in her own language. Indeed, she asked her secretaries, who were accustomed to write the letters which she sent to different places, that they remain attentive and observe everything, according as we said above, when, following her tendency, she was snatched from her bodily senses; and then what she dictated, they would write down diligently. They did that skillfully and they finished the entire book, filled with very many great and useful thoughts, revealed to her by God and dictated out loud by her in her own tongue. In this dictation there was this unique and astonishing thing that all the dictation was given by her only at that time when the senses of her body, separated from her mind, were deprived of their proper action, for her eyes did not see, nor her ears hear, nor her nose smell, nor her taste tell a flavor, nor even was her touch able to know its object for the measure of time for which she was caught up in it. And yet, God worked in such a way that the holy virgin, fixed in that ecstasy, dictated all of that book. So it was given to us to understand that the book did not come from some natural power, but only by the infusion of the Holy Spirit.⁶²

Caffarini recalls that Stefano Maconi had informed him that Catherine wrote in the book with her own hand, apparently clarifying what she had dictated to her secretaries while in ecstasy.⁶³

In her letter to Raimondo on February 15, 1380, two and a half months before she died, Catherine gives instructions concerning the care of her "*libro*": "Also I beg you that the book and any writing from me which you might find, you and Frate Bartolomeo and Frate Tommaso and the Master bring them into your hands. Together with Master Tommaso, do with them whatever you see may bring more honor to God."⁶⁴ In this way, Catherine entrusted her book to the discretion of her

⁶² "Praeconizata igitur pace, ad proprios rediit lares, et circa compositionem cujusdam libri, quem superno Spiritu afflata dictavit in suo vulgari, diligentius intendebat. Rogaverat siquidem scriptores suos, qui epistolas, quas ad diversas partes mittebat, scribere consueverant, quod starent attenti et observarent omnia, prout supra diximus, quando juxta consuetudinem suam rapiebatur a sensibus corporeis; et tunc quod dictaret, scriberent diligenter. Quod illi solerter fecerunt, librumque compilaverunt plenum magnis et utilibus nimis sententiis, ei a Domino revelatis, et vocaliter ad ipsa dictatis in vulgari sermone. In quo dictamine hoc fuit singulare et admirandum, quod totum dictamen fuit ab ea prolatum tunc tantummodo, quando ex mentis excessu sensus ejus corporei actu proprio privabantur: quia nec oculi viderunt, nec aures audierunt, nec nares senserunt odorem, nec gustus saporem, nec etiam tactus ad objectum suum moveri poterat pro illa mensura temporis, pro qua erat in illo raptu. Et tamen Domino sic operante, virgo sacra in illa extasi posita, totum illum librum dictavit: ut daretur nobis intelligi, quod liber ille non ex aliqua naturali virtute, sed a sola sancti Spiritus infusione processit." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, III, cccxxxii, 945.

⁶³ "[M]ultotiens postmodum propria manu virgo scripsit et inter alia aliquas cartas de libro quem ipsa in suo vulgari composuit." Tommaso di Antonio da Siena, *Libellus de Supplemento*, I, i, 18.

⁶⁴ "Anco vi prego che il libro e ogni scrittura la quale trovaste di me, voi e frate Bartolomeo e frate Tomaso e il Maestro, ve le rechiare per le mani; e fatene quello che vedete che sia più onore di Dio, con missere Tomaso insieme" (Letter 373, V, 291).

three confessors, Frate Raimondo, Frate Bartolomeo Dominici,⁶⁵ Frate Tommaso dalla Fonte as well as the Augustinian master of theology, Giovanni Tantucci, and the papal secretary, Master Tommaso Pietra.

The original text written by the three secretaries has not been found. There are two codices which have been regarded as the closest to the original, both of which are considered to be fourteenth-century texts. One codex, T.II.9, is in the Biblioteca Comunale di Siena. Augusta Drane describes this manuscript: "It is written on parchment, and in the margin appear certain Latin notes, set down by the disciples to whom the Saint dictated. It runs on continuously; the division into chapters, however, being noted in the margin, and, as it would seem, at a later period."⁶⁶

A second fourteenth-century text, MS 292, was located by Edmund Gardner in Rome's Biblioteca Casanatense. This manuscript had belonged to the Dominicans at the Minerva before being appropriated by the Italian government in 1870. A third important text, T.6.5., belonging to the Biblioteca Estense in Modena, is an early fifteenth-century copy of an earlier text. These three oldest texts are not subdivided into chapters and tracts as are the later manuscripts.

Scholars generally regard the Casanatense manuscript as the most authoritative because it seems apparent that Barduccio di Piero Canigiani, one of Catherine's secretaries at the time of *Il Dialogo's* composition, made this manuscript. Forty-seven of Catherine's letters are included with *Il Dialogo* in this codex. An indication that Barduccio was the scribe is the fact that two of the letters were addressed to his father, Piero Canigiani, and these contain the note "padre meo secundum carnem," while a letter to Ristoro Canigiani, Barduccio's cousin, is marked "germano meo secundum carnem." Matilde Fiorilli argues for Barduccio's involvement on the basis of an original letter, Letter 320, which is preserved in the Comunale di Siena and believed to have been written by Barduccio. Fiorilli is convinced that the handwriting of the letter and that of the manuscript is the same.⁶⁷

Bacchisio R. Motzo agrees that the scribe behind the Casanatense manuscript is Barduccio. He demonstrates that this manuscript appears to represent an early stage in the textual history in comparison with other manuscripts. In this manu-

⁶⁵ After Catherine's death, Bartolomeo Dominici taught theology, served as a prior, and then was the provincial of the Roman province from 1388 to 1398. He died in Rimini in 1415 at the age of 72.

⁶⁶ Augusta Theodosia Drane, *History of St. Catherine of Siena and Her Companions*, II (London, New York, Bombay: Longmans, Green and Co., 1899), 122.

⁶⁷ Matilde Fiorilli, "I Codici delle lettere di S. Caterina da Siena," *Rosario—Memorie Domenicane* 34 (1917): 91. Alvaro Bizzicari gives us the following information about the manuscript of MS 292 of the Biblioteca Casanatense: "Esso è un manoscritto cartaceo del sec. XIV, di cm. 14x21, scritto a piena pagina in minuscola gotica italiana, con iniziali grandi a penna in nero, e segni di capoverso sia in nero che in rosa; ha 290 carte numerate dal 2 al 290." Alvaro Bizzicari, "Il Dialogo di Caterina da Siena," *Italica* 47/2 (1970): 204.

script, the text uses the word "me," referring to the Father with whom Catherine is in dialogue. The word "me" is found in this text even following the expression "Dio e uomo" in the passages on the Eucharist. A later hand has very visibly crossed out the word "me" whenever it appears in this context. This indicates that the Casanatense text was written before Catherine's disciples were sensitive to the possible confusion between the Father, who is speaking, and the Son, who is the subject in these passages. The pronoun "me" does not appear at all in these passages in other manuscripts, indicative of a later stage when Catherine's disciples were more sensitive to theological accuracy in their effort to promote her canonization.⁶⁸ Since Barduccio died on December 8, 1382, this manuscript is thought by a number of scholars to be the one closest to the original text.

Giuliana Cavallini points out: "Other facts that attest that the Casanatense text is more closely derived from the original are: the absence of those interpolations intended to clarify difficult passages, which are found in other manuscripts, and the less accurate precision of some scriptural texts, closer to the citation by memory, than the readings which were rectified in the other codices."⁶⁹ Cavallini thinks the codex was probably made during Barduccio's stay in Rome between 1378 and 1381, and that the text was composed in Barduccio's own hand for his own use.⁷⁰

The first printed edition of *Il Dialogo* is attributed to Badassare Azzoguidi. Although it was published without an indication of a date or a place, it is thought to have been made in Bologna in 1472 or 1474. It was reprinted in Naples in 1478 and in Venice in 1482/1483 and again in Venice in 1494. There were eight editions before the beginning of the eighteenth century. In 1707, Girolamo Gigli printed a four-volume collection of Catherine's works of which *Il Dialogo* was the fourth volume. Matilde Fiorilli considers this work to be especially important because of the copious notes which Gigli gathered about Catherine and those involved with her, as

⁶⁸ "Ma poichè le correzioni dirette ad eliminare la ricorrente asperità del linguaggio teologico, mancano negli altri manoscritti a noi noti, anche in quelli riguardati come più antichi, i quali danno il testo corretto, giunsi facilmente alla conclusione che il ms. Casanatense fosse fatto sull'originale, o poco innanzi la morte di Caterina, o immediatamente dopo, prima che i cinque revisori da lei indicati compissero l'opera loro, e da uno de' discepoli così intimi di lei da poter disporre dell'originale con piena libertà. Questo discepolo non poteva essere che Barduccio Canigiani, il raccoglitore delle lettere, il quale di propria mano o di mano altrui fece scrivere il ms. Casanatense. E poichè Barduccio morì nel 1382, il manoscritto è certamente degli anni 1379-1382, assai verosimilmente del 1380-81." Bacchisio R. Motzo, "Per un'edizione critica delle opere di S. Caterina da Siena," *Annali della Facoltà di Filosofia e Lettere della R. Università di Cagliari* (1930-1931): 118-119.

⁶⁹ "Altri fatti che attestano la più diretta derivazione del Cas. dall'originale sono: l'assenza di quelle interpolazioni intese a chiarire passi difficili, che si trovano altrove, e la minore precisione di alcuni testi scritturali, più vicina alla citazione a memoria che le lezioni rettificcate degli altri codici." Cavallini, introduction to *Il Dialogo*, xlii.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, xli.

well as his evaluations of the editions before him, and his attempts to compare the various codices.⁷¹ Unfortunately, Gigli relied on a manuscript that was inaccurate and incomplete.

In 1907, Edmund Gardner described the various printed editions available at that time: "In all these editions the Italian text is unsatisfactory; but though there have been some alterations and some serious omissions made (amounting in one place, in every edition later than that published at Venice in 1517, to the greater part of two chapters), there has been no deliberate attempt at expurgation even in the most outspoken of its passages."⁷²

The twentieth century saw significant developments in establishing a critical text. Matilde Fiorilli used the codex T.II.9 in her edition of *Il Dialogo* in 1912.⁷³ The Casanatense text was used heavily by Taurisano in his editions in 1928 and in 1947. In 1968, Giuliana Cavallini prepared a text based on the Casanatense manuscript. She had been uncomfortable with the traditional divisions of the text into tracts and treatises. In studying *Il Dialogo*, Cavallini detected a pattern of petition, response, thanksgiving, summary, and expanded thanksgiving. Her insight was confirmed by the Casanatense text which, she found, employs a capital letter at the start of such sections. Her edition was based on this original division. In 1995, Cavallini produced the critical text of *Il Dialogo*, complete with the textual variants and extensive notes.

Cristofano di Gano Guidini, a notary in Siena who had at times served as one of Catherine's secretaries, made a Latin translation of the book, of which fourteenth-century codices exist in Siena, Venice, and Subiaco. Cristofano di Gano Guidini explained his reasons for the translation:

Then since the book was and is in the vulgar tongue, and those who know grammar and have learning and do not read so willingly things in the vulgar tongue as they do literary pieces, for myself and also for the benefit of my neighbors, I was moved and I made it into Latin purely according to the text, not adding anything. And I tried to do it the best that I knew and I struggled for a number of years at my pleasure, with one piece now and then another.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Matilde Fiorilli, "Nota," in *Il Libro della divina dottrina di S. Caterina da Siena*, ed. Matilde Fiorilli (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1928), 413-415.

⁷² Gardner, *Saint Catherine of Siena*, xv.

⁷³ Fiorilli preferred this codex to those others available because the consistent preservation not only of Catherine's expressions but also of the idioms of the period and of the people: "Infatti questo codice T.II.9. solo fra gli altri sopra nominati, serba intatte tutte le ingenuità delle espressioni, certe incongruenze nei periodi, i pleonasmi e gli idiotismi delle voci e specialmente dei modi che sono propri del parlare dei popolani." Fiorilli, "Nota," 414.

⁷⁴ "Poi, perchè il detto libro era ed è per volgare, e chi sa grammatica o ha scienza e non legge tanto volentieri le cose che sono per volgare, quanto fa quelle per lettera; per me medesimo, e ancor per utilità del prossimo, mossimi, e fecilo, per lettere puramente secondo il testo, non aggiungendovi

In his *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis (Legenda major)*, Raimondo refers to his own translation of the prologue and the closing prayer of *Il Dialogo*. He assures the reader: "Not adding any sentence nor changing anything, indeed, insofar as I knew and was able, I kept the order of her words. And I attempted, as much as the Latin language allows, to translate word for word."⁷⁵ Because of a tradition that Raimondo had translated the entire work into Latin, the printed editions of the Latin were ascribed to him. Innocenzo Taurisano, O.P., has demonstrated that Raimondo, in fact, translated only the first five chapters and the last two. Stefano Maconi, another of Catherine's secretaries, made a Latin translation that was the actual basis of the printed Latin editions.⁷⁶ The first of these was printed in 1496 at Brescia.

In the fifteenth century, *Il Dialogo* was translated into Middle English for the Bridgettine nuns at Syon Abbey. The text came to be known as *The Orchard of Syon*. While the text makes reference to the work of Brother Dane James, it is not known whether he is the translator or assisted the translator. His identity and relation to the Abbey is also not known. Manuscripts of this work from the first half of the fifteenth century exist in the British Museum in London and in St. John's Library in Cambridge. A manuscript from the second half of the fifteenth century is found in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City. *The Orchard* follows Guidini's Latin version, which is closer to the original Italian than is Maconi's.

In 1519, Wynkyn de Worde printed *The Orchard*. This work was reprinted in 1966 by Phyllis Hodgson and Gabriel M. Liegey. The work has particular value among the vernacular devotional writings of the late Middle Ages. Although *The Orchard* paraphrases *Il Dialogo*, Sr. Jeremy Finnegan, O.P., observes that the work is a reliable reflection of the original: "Faithful to Catherine's thought, he conveys it in a style so fresh and immediate that one might wonder whether it is not closer to the saint's voice than are some other, later versions."⁷⁷

The later version that Finnegan has in mind is probably that of Algar Thorold. Thorold published his English translation in 1896. His work has been reprinted several times and was for most of the twentieth century the only accessible translation

nulla; e m'ingenai di farlo il meglio ch'io seppi, e pugnai parecchi anni a mio diletto, quando uno pezzo quando uno altro." Ser Cristofano di Gano Guidini, "Le Memorie di Ser Gano," in Innocenzo Taurisano, O.P., *I Fioretti di Santa Caterina da Siena* (Roma: Libreria Editrice F. Ferreari, 1950), 237-238.

⁷⁵ "[N]ullam addendo sententiam vel aliquid immutando; imo quantum scivi et potui, servavi ordinem verborum ejus; et conatus sum, quantum Latina locutio patitur, transferre de verbo ad verbum...." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis* III, cccl, 949.

⁷⁶ Innocenzo Taurisano, introduction to Caterina da Siena, *Dialogo della divina provvidenza*, ed. Innocenzo Taurisano (Roma: Libreria Editrice F. Ferrari, 1947), xxvii-xxix.

⁷⁷ M. Jeremy Finnegan, O.P., "St. Catherine in England: The Orchard of Syon," *Spirituality Today* 32 (March 1980): 15.

in English. Noffke observes: "The translation itself is heavily Victorian in tone, uncomfortable reading for today. Though it is on the whole an extremely slavish rendering of the Italian structures, it is quite frequently inaccurate, and difficult passages are often omitted or broadly paraphrased."⁷⁸

Noffke published her own translation in 1980, relying on Cavallini's 1968 edition. This edition, part of the *Classics of Western Spirituality*, has at last made Catherine's *libro* accessible to English-speaking people in a translation that is both readable and precise.

Le Lettere

Catherine's most extensive writings are her letters. Benedict Hackett, O.S.A., comments: "No woman mystic in medieval times – and there was no shortage of outstanding ones in Germany, the Low Countries, England and Italy itself – equaled her, or can be even compared with her as a correspondent. Certainly, as far as the fourteenth century goes, she ranks second only to Petrarch, an outstanding achievement in itself when one remembers that she had no formal education, and definitely no training in grammar."⁷⁹

During the last ten years of her life (1370-1380), Catherine sent approximately three hundred eighty-two letters⁸⁰ to a number of people which included, among others: popes, cardinals, bishops, a king, queens, rulers of the Italian states, clergy, nuns, friars, monks, *Mantellate*, her mother and brothers, a married couple, widows, a Jewish man, an artist, a prostitute, and a notorious leader of mercenary soldiers. Suzanne Noffke notes that sixty-seven of Catherine's letters are to political figures, thirteen to royalty, thirty-eight to civic officials, ten to lawyers, and six to military leaders.⁸¹

Catherine dictated most of her letters although she appears to have written some. Caffarini in the *Processus* recalls Stefano's account of an instance when Catherine herself wrote: "Rising from prayer with the desire to write, she wrote with her own hand a letter which the same Stefano sent, in which she concluded, in her own

⁷⁸ Suzanne Noffke, O.P., introduction to *The Letters of St. Catherine of Siena* (1988), 21.

⁷⁹ Benedict Hackett, O.S.A., "Catherine of Siena and William of England: A Curious Partnership," in *Proceedings of the PMR Conference...* (Villanova, PA: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1980), 33.

⁸⁰ As Suzanne Noffke points out, the number of letters differs depending on whether one includes the same letter as it is sent to two different people and whether one considers T371 to be actually a continuation of T373. See Suzanne Noffke, O.P., *The Letters of Catherine of Siena*, vol. I (2000), xiii, n.2.

⁸¹ Suzanne Noffke, O.P., *Catherine of Siena: Vision*, 76.

dialect, clearly, 'You know, my dearest son, that this is the first letter that I ever wrote.'⁸²

Around three hundred eighty-two of the letters are known. The originals of eight of her letters have been preserved, five in the MS T.III.3 of the Biblioteca Comunale of Siena (T298, T319, T320, T329 and T332), two at the Church of St. Lucia in Siena (T365 and T192), and one in the Jesuit Church of St. Aloysius in Oxford (F16), which was discovered by Robert Fawtier.

Catherine's earliest secretaries were her female friends. Later, on occasion, her priest disciples served as her secretaries. Generally, however, her young male disciples did this work. Francesco Malavolti recalls Catherine dictating three different letters simultaneously to Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi, Stefano Maconi, and himself:

Indeed, I saw that the servant of Christ, Catherine, by the power of the Holy Spirit, dictated many letters at the same time to many scribes and particularly to three together, not only once but innumerable times through many years... She would dictate now in one way, then in another, now with her head covered, now with her head raised high to heaven, her hands crisscrossed, many times she came into ecstasy, while still dictating.⁸³

On one occasion, the three secretaries realized that they had each taken down the same passage as though it were for them. Catherine completed her dictation and when the letters were read back, the section seemed to fit into each letter.

Noffke is under the impression that the disciples had a certain flexibility in transcribing Catherine's words, recognizing that their devotion to her caused them to be very faithful to her spoken word.⁸⁴ Eugenio Dupré Theseider notes that Cath-

⁸² "[A]b oratione surgens cum desiderio scribendi scripsit propria manu unam litteram quam ipsi dicto dno Stephano transmisit, in qua ita concluderetur, scilicet in suo vulgari videlicet: 'Scias, mi fili carissime, quod hec est prima littera quam unquam ego scripserim.'" *Il Processo Castellano*, 62.

⁸³ "Vidi etiam istam servam Christi Catherinam virtute Spiritus sancti multas litteras simul dictare pluribus scriptoribus et singulariter tribus pariter, nec hoc solum semel, sed quasi innumeris vicibus et per plures annos.... Ipsa vero dictabat modo uni, modo alteri, et nunc capite cooperto, nunc capite in celum erecto, manibus cancellatis, et multis vicibus veniebat in extasi, et nichilominus etiam taliter se habente tunc dicebat." *Il Processo Castellano*, 403.

⁸⁴ "It has so far been impossible to discern for certain to what extent Catherine's secretaries transcribed word for word at her dictation and to what extent they simply took notes and then filled out the text. I believe further linguistic study could resolve that question more precisely, but the surface evidence suggests that both processes were at play. There are enough minor differences from letter to letter, and enough suppression of the Sieneese dialectal forms, to indicate some influence of the individual scribes' backgrounds on what each transcribed. (It would be surprising if this were not true, given their linguistic, cultural and professional diversity and the speed at which Catherine was accustomed to dictate!) But the general consistency in style and above all in conceptual development make it highly unlikely that in substance the wording comes from anyone but Catherine herself." Suzanne Noffke, O.P., introduction to *The Letters of St. Catherine of Siena* (1988), 10.

erine's frequent ecstasies would necessarily have created a difficulty for the secretaries taking dictation.⁸⁵

It is apparent that Catherine's secretaries kept a collection of copies of her letters. A letter from Stefano Maconi to Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi, in June of 1379, not only indicates that the disciples made and shared copies of the letters but also mentions not having an otherwise unknown letter of Catherine to the king of England.⁸⁶ After her death, her disciples preserved collections of the letters. In his deposition for the *Processus*, the Franciscan Angelo Salvetti recalls visiting Cristofano di Gano Guidini and being shown some of Catherine's letters.⁸⁷ Stefano Maconi, likewise, showed Salvetti copies of Catherine's letters that Stefano had made.⁸⁸

In recopying the letters, the personal elements were eliminated, apparently being considered distractions to the more universal spiritual message, although captions were added, giving the name of the recipients and the occasion of the letter. There was not much concern for the chronology of the letters so that presently only twenty-six letters have dates.

There exist twenty-seven major and twenty-eight minor collections of manuscripts of the letters, almost all of which are in Italy. All of these collections can be traced to four families of manuscripts. These four main families or collections of Catherine's letters are identified with four of her disciples. Tommaso Caffarini disclosed in his *Libellus de Supplemento*, that, in 1398, he received from Cristofano di

⁸⁵ "Non credo che essi scrivessero tutte le lettere sotto dettatura dalla prima all'ultima parola. Spesso non doveva nemmeno essere possibile. Caterina era certamente non meno irruente nel parlare quanto decisa nell'agire; inoltre molte lettere scritte sotto l'influsso dello stato estatico saranno certamente uscite dalla sua bocca in modo sommario, rotto, poco intelligibile. Terminata l'estasi, i segretarii con ogni probabilità rivedevano e correggevano, integravano la minuta che avevano davanti, allontanandosi inevitabilmente sempre più da ciò che Caterina aveva in realtà detto." Eugenio Dupré Theseider, "Sono autentiche le lettere di S. Caterina?" *Vita Cristiana* 12 (1940): 240.

⁸⁶ "Non mi ricorda come io ti scrissi di non avere avuta da te se non quella lettera da Perogia; forse che per la fretta errai nello scrivere. Ma questa è la terza lettera, e la seconda fu di quelle lettere e novelle dello 'mperadore, nella quale mi promettesti di mandarmene la copia, e mai non l'ebbi. Anco le scrissi io allora a Riccardo a Fiorenza secondo che mi dicesti; ma questa altra lettera con quella copia di quella che andò al Re d'Inghilterra io non l'ò avuta. Dici ch'io la procacci; ma io non so da cui. Scrivemi per cui la madasti. Secondo ch'io ò scritto costà a te, almeno in due lettere, che tu procacci da trentasei lettere ch'io vi mandai quando el Maestro ne venne; ed a cui, e nondimeno non m'ài risposto se l'avete tutte avute o no. E maraviglianci un poco, se l'avete avute, che non avete mandata mai alcuna risposta." "Letter of Stefano Maconi to Pagliaresi" (June 22, 1379), *Le Lettere*, VI, ed. Misciatteli, Lettere XIII, 74-75.

⁸⁷ "[A]liquas ex suis epistolis mihi ostendit...." *Il Processo Castellano*, 440.

⁸⁸ "Fuerat enim magno tempore eisdem virginis cancellarius et scriptor epistularum quasi ad omnem statum, quas sibi copiavit et mihi ostendit." *Ibid.*, 441-442.

Gano Guidini two volumes of letters which Caffarini brought to Venice.⁸⁹ Caffarini had these letters transcribed. He then arranged these letters and some others from different sources into two collections. The first consisted of one hundred fifty-five letters addressed to clergy and religious. The second included one hundred thirty-nine letters to lay people. Dupré believes that this was the basis of the collection now known as S2/3. From Caffarini's deposition in *Il Processo Castellano*, we know that a scriptorium existed in Venice, promulgating Catherine's works.⁹⁰ In comparing these letters with other manuscripts, Dupré became convinced that Caffarini modified the text in some places.⁹¹

The three other families of manuscripts are traced to Catherine's secretaries: Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi, Stefano di Corrado Maconi, and Barduccio di Piero Canigiani. Neri willed his collection to the monks at Monteoliveto Maggiore and that manuscript is known as Mo. This collection was discovered by Dupré Theseider in the Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek Palatino in Vienna. Dupré believes that Neri transcribed most of these letters, with some help from an unidentified copyist before Neri's death in 1406.⁹² Dupré Theseider relied heavily on this codex of two hundred nineteen letters for his critical edition of Catherine's first eighty-eight letters.

Maconi is credited as the source of a collection of two hundred and five letters known as B which is also considered an authoritative source because of its proximity to the original compositions. Another collection of forty-six letters, known as C, is part of the *Casanatense* manuscript that also contains *Il Dialogo*, and is attributed

⁸⁹ "[S]er Christoforus Ghani, notarius de Senis.... Insuper quasi omnes epistolas virginis hinc inde dispersas recollegit in unum, ita ut ex illis conficeret duo volumina que, cum anno Domini 1398 me reperirem in Senis, mecum illas asportavi Venetias. Quas non solum transcribi feci, sed etiam in duobus voluminibus ad certum ordinem ipsas reduxi, de quo infra narratur." Tommaso di Antonio da Siena, *Libellus de Supplemento*, III, iv, 394-5.

⁹⁰ "[D]e pluritate scriptorum in Venetiis actualiter existentium, qui plura de pertinentibus ad virginem ad pertitionem multorum scripserunt, hinc inde etiam transmittenda; et de diffusione librorum et fame sue per orbem, et consimiliter sue ymaginis vel figure in diversis locis christianitatis depicte sive ad illa transmissa, ac de sue excellentia sanctitatis; et qualiter pre aliis multa dimiserit ad edificationem ecclesie, et quomodo tanquam singulariter approbata decenter sit in ecclesia non solum specialiter veneranda, sed quod etiam annuatim sit aliquo modo eius memoria recolenda contestor et dico nunc actualiter esse in Venetiis quam plures scriptores, ultra alios qui desunt, qui ad petitionem diversorum habuerunt scribere opera virginis, utpote legendam vel epistolas aut orationes seu librum virginis, et aliquando in plurimum in latino, quandoque vero in vulgari sermone, aliquoties hinc inde per diversas mundi partes transmittenda." *Il Processo Castellano*, 91-92.

⁹¹ "Vero è però che il Caffarini non si fa molti scrupoli di modificare il testo delle lettere, come del resto fanno, generalmente, tutti gli editori medievali di testi." Eugenio Dupré Theseider, "Il problema critico delle lettere di S. Caterina da Siena," *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano e Archivio Muratoriano* 49 (1933): 87.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 23.

to Barduccio di Piero Canigiani. Dupré adds his voice to those who identify this codex as the work of Barduccio, noting that it is not a coincidence that all the letters in this collection fall into the last two years of Catherine's life during the time when Barduccio served as a secretary for Catherine.⁹³ Since Barduccio died two years after Catherine, this collection is regarded as the oldest.

The very first printed edition of Catherine's letters was done by Giovanni Giacomo Fontanesi in Bologna in 1492 and consisted of thirty-one letters. In 1500, at Venice, Aldo Manuzio published three hundred fifty-three letters mostly based on the Caffarini texts. This was the largest collection up to this point. The letters were arranged in hierarchical order starting with popes and concluding with the laity. For two centuries this was the standard text. The book was printed three other times in the sixteenth century.

Girolamo Gigli included *L'Epistole della serafica vergine s. Caterina da Siena* in his four-volume publication of Catherine's complete works. The letters are the second volume, published in Siena in 1713, and the third volume, produced in Lucca in 1721. Since Gigli had discovered an additional twenty-one letters in several Siense manuscripts, his edition included three hundred and seventy-three letters. The letters were annotated by Federico Burlamacchi, S.J. Gigli attempted to group the letters together according to the recipient and then to order those in a chronological order. Gigli also composed a dictionary of Catherine's vocabulary. One of Gigli's purposes was to demonstrate the superiority of the Siense Italian over that of Florence. His work on the letters remained the norm until the middle of the following century.

E. Cartier translated the letters into French, *Lettres di Sainte Catherine de Siense*, which was published in Paris in 1858. Niccolò Tommasèo, in 1860, produced a new Italian edition, *Lettere di Santa Caterina da Siena*, in four volumes. Tommasèo attempted an arrangement of the letters in chronological order, but since he was elderly and nearly blind he was unable to accomplish this adequately.

In 1907, the English Dante scholar Edmund G. Gardner published *Saint Catherine of Siena: A Study in the Religion, Literature and History of the Fourteenth Century in Italy*. This volume included eight letters which Gardner had discovered. Bacchisio Motzo, in 1911, found and brought attention to seven better versions of particular letters. Robert Fawtier uncovered some fourteen variant versions of letters and two new letters which he published in 1914.⁹⁴ Eugenio Dupré Theseider published two new letters in 1931.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁹⁴ See Robert Fawtier, "Catheriniana," *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire* 34 (1914): 3-95.

Matilde Fiorilli attempted a new edition of the letters, but she died suddenly in 1921.⁹⁵ Between 1913 and 1922, Piero Misciattelli reprinted Tommasèo in six volumes adding the more recently discovered letters and fragments as well as including letters of Catherine's disciples.⁹⁶ This was republished in 1939-1940 and again in 1970. Lodovico Ferretti, between 1918 and 1939, republished Tommasèo, adding some notes of his own. Umberto Meattini undertook a new printing of Tommasèo in 1966. While these efforts offered new editions of Catherine's letters, they did not attempt to present a critical text.

In 1928, the *Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo* engaged Eugenio Duprè Theseider, a Waldensian, to do a new edition of the letters, using contemporary critical principles. He published a volume of eighty-eight letters as *Epistolario di Santa Caterina da Siena* in 1940. This was intended to be the first volume of the critical edition of the letters. Duprè died in 1975, leaving his research unfinished. In 1980, Professor Antonio Volpato assumed the task of completing this work. No new volumes have been published but the work is continuing. Establishing the chronology of the letters is especially difficult, given that the key personal elements of the letters have generally been deleted.

It is hoped that through the increased accessibility of Catherine's letters, scholars will come to appreciate their value as theological resources. It is significant that the article prepared by Cardinal Pietro Parente, a member of the Pontificia Accademia Teologica Romana, in preparation for the conferral of the title of Doctor of the Church on Catherine, drew its insights only from *Il Dialogo*, and not from the letters, which are also a rich reservoir of Catherine's thought.⁹⁷

English readers, in particular, have had little exposure to Catherine's letters. Fragments of the letters have been included in works on Catherine written in English. Vida Scudder translated sixty-four letters in *Saint Catherine of Siena as Seen in Her Letters*, published in London in 1905. Edmund Gardner included parts of the letters in his work of 1907. Mother Augusta Theodosia Drane, O.P., included a selection of parts of the letters in her two-volume *History of St. Catherine of Siena and Her Companions* printed in London in 1914.

In 1980, Kenelm Foster, O.P., and Mary John Ronayne, O.P., English Dominicans, produced *I, Catherine: Selected Writings of Catherine of Siena*, containing sixty letters. A major development in the study of Catherine's letters for English-speaking

⁹⁵ The introduction to her intended work was posthumously published as "L'Epistolario di Santa Caterina da Siena," *Miscellanea Dominicana in memoriam VII anni saecularis ab obitu S. Patris Dominici* (Roma: Ferrari, 1923), 196-205.

⁹⁶ *Le Lettere di S. Caterina da Siena, ridotte a miglior lezione, e in ordine nuovo disposte con note di Niccolò Tommasèo*, ed. Piero Misciattelli (Siena: Giuntini & Bentivoglio, 1913-1922).

⁹⁷ Card. Pietro Parente, "La teologia di S. Caterina da Siena," *Divinitas* 14 (1970): 29-41.

people has come about through the work of Sr. Suzanne Noffke, O.P. In 1988, Noffke translated the eighty-eight letters of the Dupré Theseider edition of 1940 as *The Letters of St. Catherine*. In 2000, Sr. Noffke produced a new edition of the first volume and then a second volume of the letters in 2001. Sr. Noffke is working with the Italian researchers to ascertain the authoritative Italian text and correct chronology as she prepares the two remaining volumes for publication in English.

In the references to the letters, I will rely on Tommasèo's numbering, found in Piero Misciattelli's 1939-1940 edition, with Roman numerals provided for those letters which were discovered after Tommasèo and which are found in the sixth volume of Misciattelli. For those letters which are contained in Dupré Theseider's text and in Noffke's translation, I will also provide Dupré Theseider's numbering.

Le Orazioni

The third category of Catherine's writings is her prayers. Yves Congar, O.P., has called Catherine's prayers "theology turned into doxology."⁹⁸ Catherine's disciples were accustomed to hearing her pray vocally. Some of her prayers were recalled in Raimondo's *Legenda maior*, Caffarini's *Legenda minor*, and in Caffarini's *Supplementum*. Catherine's letters and *Il Dialogo* are replete with prayers. In addition to these prayers, twenty-six prayers were recorded by Catherine's disciples during a period from the vigil of the Assumption in 1376, when Catherine was at Avignon, until January 30, 1380, while she was in Rome. Nineteen of the prayers are from a fourteen-month period during her stay in Rome from December 21, 1378, to January 30, 1380.

Bartolomeo Dominici, one of her Dominican disciples, described the origins of the written prayers:

Having consumed the host, her mind was lifted up to God, so that she immediately lost the use of her senses...and so daily for nearly three hours and more she remained totally absorbed and insensible.... Frequently also, fixed in this ecstasy, while speaking with God, she brought forth profound prayers and devout entreaties in a clear voice.... And the prayers for the greater part were put into writing word for word: some actually by me, and even more by others, when she, as was said, brought them forth in a clear and distinct voice.... For in no way did the speech and the sense of the words seem to be of a woman but the doctrine and thoughts of a great doctor.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Yves Congar, O.P., "Le Saint-Esprit dans les prières de Sainte Catherine di Sienne," in *Alli del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Cateriniani, Siena-Roma, 24-26 aprile 1980* (Roma: Curia Generalizia O.P., 1981), 333.

⁹⁹ "Sumpta enim hostia, sic rapiebatur mens eius in Deum, quod statim perdebat usum sensuum...sicque cotidie fere per tres horas et ultra permanebat totaliter absorta et insensibilis. Sepe etiam, in tali extasi posita, cum Deo loquendo, orationes et postulationes profundas atque

The oldest extant texts of some of her prayers are preserved in Latin. Seven of her prayers have no early Italian version. Catherine's knowledge of Latin probably did not extend beyond what she was exposed to through the liturgy. Thus it is unlikely that she prayed in Latin. Noffke notes that: "internal linguistic evidence...usually points to the Italian as probably more original."¹⁰⁰ Her Italian prayers may have been written down in Latin or were translated into Latin shortly after they were given.

There are two principal collections of Catherine's prayers.¹⁰¹ The Latin series includes twenty-two prayers preserved in three codices. One of these, XIV.24 (R), is preserved in the archives of the Dominican Curia Generalizia at Santa Sabina in Rome. This manuscript comes from the end of the fourteenth century. In this manuscript, the prayers are included together with Raimondo's *Legenda*, Raimondo's Latin translation of the prologue and first five chapters of *Il Dialogo*, and other materials relating to Catherine. The prayers have marginal notes written in another hand, giving the places, times, and sometimes the people gathered when the prayers were uttered. These marginal notes also refer to an earlier source called the "Epitaph of Stefano Maconi" (E). While E has not been discovered, its existence argues for a primitive collection of the prayers in Italian.

T.II.7 (S1) is located in the Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, Siena, and is considered to date from the end of the fourteenth century. S1 contains two codices. The first, S1a, includes the twenty-two Latin prayers of R in the same order. The second, S1b, has seventeen prayers in Italian, sixteen of which may be found in S1a in a different order. Interestingly, the references to E, found in the R text, have the same ordering as the one found in S1b. The third Latin codex, XIV.B.40 (N), which was made either at the same time or shortly after R and S1, contains the first eleven prayers and part of the twelfth. It is preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli.

Two Italian prayers, a shorter Italian version of *Oratio* I and II, and four Latin prayers are included with ninety-six of Catherine's letters in an early fifteenth-century manuscript, I.VI.14 (S2), in the Biblioteca Comunale di Siena and in a late fourteenth-century document, 3514 (V), in the Biblioteca Nazionale, Palatino,

devotas clara voce proferebat.... Que orationes pro magna parte fuerunt redacte in scriptis de verbo ad verbum: aliquae scilicet per me, quamplures vero per alios, quando ipsa, ut dictum est, clara voce et distincta proferebat easdem.... Nequaquam enim apparent vocabula illa et sensus ille verborum esse mulieris, sed doctrina et sententiae magni doctoris." *Il Processo Castellano*, 328-329.

¹⁰⁰ Suzanne Noffke, O.P., Introduction, *The Prayers of Catherine of Siena*, trans. Suzanne Noffke (New York/Ramsey, NJ: Paulist, 1983), 7.

¹⁰¹ See Giuliana Cavallini's introduction to *Le Orazioni* (Roma: Edizioni Catheriniane, 1978), ix-xxv, and Suzanne Noffke's introduction to *The Prayers*, 1-9, for additional information on these manuscripts.

Vienna. (S3) MS. T.I.2, at the Biblioteca Comunale in Siena, and (B) MS. 1574, at the Biblioteca Universitaria in Bologna, which are from the beginning of the fifteenth century, incorporate the oldest Latin versions of *Oratio XXV* and *XXVI* and are inserted in the text of Caffarini's *Libellus de Supplemento*.

The Latin prayers were published with the Latin version of the *Il Dialogo* in five editions between 1496 and 1601.¹⁰² In 1500, at Venice, Aldo Manuzio included an Italian version of twenty-six prayers in his edition of three hundred and fifty-three of Catherine's letters. Girolamo Gigli, in 1707, printed the twenty-six prayers in his *Opere di S. Caterina da Siena*. A critical edition of the prayers, *Le Orazioni*, was made by Giuliana Cavallini in 1976, preserving both the oldest Latin and Italian versions of the prayers. Suzanne Noffke, O.P., used this critical text as the basis of her English translation, *The Prayers of Catherine of Siena*, which was published in 1983. A new edition of Noffke's translation was published in 2001, providing extensive revisions of her introductions and notes. In the references to the prayers, we will give the numbering according to the Cavallini edition which can be coordinated with Noffke's chronological numbering by means of the table which Noffke provides.¹⁰³

Catherine's Style

Giovanni Getto points out that Catherine's style is rooted in her prayer: "Her language has all the characteristics of religious meditation."¹⁰⁴ Getto demonstrates this by showing that even in Catherine's letters, a discussion of the doctrinal framework precedes both her own opinions and her exhortations. Getto asserts that the fundamental tone does not change from letter to letter or from the *Letters* to *Il Dialogo*. Even her letters to the popes come to the same points as her letters to all others. Getto states: "The interior world of the passions and the virtues, felt dramatically, is, in fact, at the center of Catherine's interest. All the letters and the entire *Dialogo* do not constitute other than one unique picture, repeated innumerable times, of this interior world."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² B. de Misintis, Brixie, 1496; G. Gennepaeus, Cologne, 1553; T. Baumium, Cologne, 1569; D. Sartorius, Ingolstadi, 1583; Birkmann, Coloniae Agrippinae, 1601.

¹⁰³ Noffke, *Prayers* (1983), 10; *Prayers* (2001), xxiv.

¹⁰⁴ "Il suo linguaggio ha tutti i caratteri della meditazione religiosa...." Giovanni Getto, *Letteratura religiosa del Trecento* (Firenze: G.C. Sansoni, 1967), 172.

¹⁰⁵ "Il mondo interiore delle passioni e delle virtù, sentito drammaticamente, sta infatti al centro dell'interesse cateriniano. Tutte le lettere e l'intero dialogo non costituiscono altro che un unico quadro, ripetuto innumerevoli volte, di questo mondo interiore." *Ibid.*, 169.

Suzanne Noffke has made some interesting comparisons between various samples of Catherine's style and samples of the styles of six fourteenth-century Tuscan writers. She has observed that Catherine layered her ideas with modifications and qualifications, not so much by compound clauses or coordinate clauses or even adjectives and adverbs, as with multiple prepositional phrases, frequently using, for instance, *di* in an appositive sense. Noffke has noted: "These features mark her style with a complexity that at its peaks becomes almost maze-like in its layering of concepts, and generally more so in the *Dialogue* than in her *Letters*."¹⁰⁶

Noffke also comments on the way Catherine, unlike other authors, layered by means of repetition: "Catherine uses it [layering] to some extent in the *Letters*, and in the *Dialogue* one cannot miss it. In fact, it is so pervasive in the latter that counting the instances becomes a challenge, since Catherine has so many ways of repeating!"¹⁰⁷ Arrigo Levasti finds a musical quality in Catherine's repetition of words and phrases: "At times the musical power is based upon a single word, which gives rise to winding rhythmic variations, returning with a gentle force. If, at first, a certain monotony is found, we then discover the tonal variations as this word continues to be repeated insistently in our soul."¹⁰⁸ Levasti points out that this pattern of repetition was used by medieval preachers.¹⁰⁹ Luisa Aurigemma maintains that Catherine's use of repetition imitates the biblical use of parallelism and symmetry.¹¹⁰

Catherine's habit of dwelling upon a word or phrase was characteristic of her own prayer, as Bartolomeo Dominici records in his deposition: "In like manner, reading, or praying out loud she did not care to read or pray much, but she chewed over a single word and when she found any word which especially delighted her mind, she fed on that as long as her mind stayed delighted."¹¹¹

Noffke offers translators a number of legitimate alternative ways to reproduce Catherine's writing but remarks that the effect of Catherine's use of repetition was

¹⁰⁶ Suzanne Noffke, O.P., "Translating the Works of Catherine of Siena into English: Some Basic Considerations," *Congresso Internazionale di Studi Cateriniani, Siena-Roma, 24-29 aprile 1980* (Rome: Curia Generalizia O.P., 1981), 474.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ "A volte, il potere musicale si fonda sopra una sola parola, la quale produce variazioni ritmiche sinuose, e ritornanti con dolce forza. Se una certa monotonia vi si ritrova a tutta prima, ne scopriamo poi la variazione tonale quando questa parola continua a ripetersi insistente nel nostro animo." Arrigo Levasti, "S. Caterina da Siena scrittrice," *Memorie Domenicane* 64 (1947): 219.

¹⁰⁹ "Era uso medioevale l'insistente ripetizione, e la ritroviamo parecchio nei predicatori..." Levasti, "S. Caterina da Siena scrittrice," 220.

¹¹⁰ Luisa Aurigemma, "Lingua e stile del 'Dialogo della Divina Provvidenza' di Santa Caterina da Siena," *Critica letteraria* 26, fasc. I, n. 58 (1988): 121-122.

¹¹¹ "Item quod legendo vel vocaliter orando non curaret multum legere vel orare; sed ruminaret verba singula et cum verbum aliquod inveniret quod mentem singulariter delectaret, in illo tamdiu sisteret quamdiu mens delectabiliter pasceretur." *Il Processo Castellano*, 303.

intentional and so the translator must retain the repetition: "There is no question of what must be done here if Catherine's style is to be at all approximated in an English translation: repeat as she repeats."¹¹² In her study, Noffke found that similes and metaphors were used occasionally in the other Tuscan writings but observes: "In Catherine, however, we find them cropping up in any context at all, and often piling up like tidal waves."¹¹³

The Influences on Catherine

Considering Catherine's lack of education, the breadth of her theological understanding is surprising. Getto has said of Catherine: "In all her works there are traces of a whole technical and complex theological vocabulary that goes beyond the popular level, which is a sign of her dogmatic formation and of her piety founded on a solid doctrinal base."¹¹⁴

The effort to decipher the sources that influenced Catherine's thought has evoked many opinions, some of which are contradictory. Pope Pius II, in his bull of canonization, declared that Catherine's teaching was "infused not acquired."¹¹⁵ This divine inspiration should not be underestimated, since even in the natural arts the artist's production is much more than the sum of the influences, and even those influences are tapped in unique ways by the artist. Catherine drew from a number of sources to which she was exposed but she incorporated and transformed those ideas in her own fashion.

This independence can be seen in her use of Scripture. When Catherine gave an unusual interpretation of Jesus' agony in the Garden of Olives, Raimondo pointed out to her that this was not the conventional understanding of the Gospel passage. He recalls her answer: "She responded that the actions of our Savior are so rich, if they are considered attentively, that anyone, according to his reflection, finds part of his food in them, according to what is needed by him, especially for his salvation."¹¹⁶

¹¹² Noffke, "Translating the Works of Catherine of Siena," 480.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 474.

¹¹⁴ "Ma nella sua opera ci sono le tracce di tutto un linguaggio tecnico teologico, complesso e per nulla popolare, che è il segno della sua formazione dogmatica e della sua pietà fondata su una solida base dottrinale." Getto, *Letteratura religiosa*, 141.

¹¹⁵ "Doctrina eius infusa non acquisita fuit..." Pius II, "Bolla di canonizzazione di S. Caterina da Siena," in *Il Processo Castellano*, 528.

¹¹⁶ "Illa respondit: Gesta Salvatoris nostri sunt ita pingua, si attente considerentur, quod quilibet secundum suam considerationem invenit in eis partem cibi sui, secundum quod expendit sibi vel suae salutis." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, II, ccix, 914.

The most evident influence on Catherine is clearly that of the Scriptures. Her frequent allusions to the Bible demonstrate a familiarity derived from listening to the Scriptures at Mass and at the Office, as well as from pondering them in her meditation. Emilio Piovesan estimates that there are in *Il Dialogo* fifty-one passages evoking Old Testament references.¹¹⁷ Giuliana Cavallini identifies fifty verses found solely in the Gospel of John that are alluded to in Catherine's letters and another thirty-eight in *Il Dialogo*. There are twenty-three expressions found only in the Gospel of Matthew that are cited in her letters and nineteen in *Il Dialogo*; twenty-three found only in the Gospel of Luke in her letters and eight in *Il Dialogo*; and one reference that is exclusively in the Gospel of Mark in *Il Dialogo*.¹¹⁸ Piovesan finds one hundred eleven allusions to Paul in *Il Dialogo*.¹¹⁹ Catherine explicitly uses Paul's name fifteen times in *Il Dialogo*. Suzanne Noffke describes Catherine's use of biblical expressions and passages:

She seldom "cites" them, as medieval writers so commonly cited biblical passages in support of what they were saying, as "proof texts." Instead they flow in and out of her sentences as naturally as if they were her own, sometimes intact, sometimes rephrased, sometimes in new and different combinations... They are her very vocabulary... They are not appliqués on the surface but threads without which the whole fabric would disintegrate.¹²⁰

The influence of the liturgical feasts can be seen in Catherine's letters. Thus, her letter to Frate Bartolomeo Domenici takes up the theme of Palm Sunday: "...to receive our King, who comes to us humble and meek sitting on a donkey. O inestimable beloved charity, today, You confound human pride, to see that You, King of kings, come humiliated upon the beast, driven out with such shame."¹²¹ In Letter 119, written in December of 1377, when Catherine was at Rocca d'Orcia, she uses the time of Advent to identify her situation: "In the body He has provided

¹¹⁷ There are six citations from Genesis, nine from Exodus, sixteen from the Psalms, ten from Isaiah, two from Jeremiah, three from Ezekiel, two from the Song of Songs and three from Zechariah. Emilio Piovesan, "Come Caterina da Siena conosce ed usa la Bibbia nel *Dialogo*," in *Saggi e studi sulla spiritualità di S. Caterina da Siena*, sp. ed. *Vita Cristiana* 16 (1947): 79.

¹¹⁸ Giuliana Cavallini, "Fonti neotestamentarie degli scritti cateriniani," in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Cateriniani, Siena-Roma, 24-29 aprile 1980* (Roma: Curia Generalizia O. P., 1981), 45.

¹¹⁹ Piovesan, "Come Caterina," 90.

¹²⁰ Suzanne Noffke, O.P., *Catherine of Siena: Vision through a Distant Eye*, 43-44.

¹²¹ "[A] ricevere il Re nostro, che viene a noi umile, e mansueto siede sopra l'asina. O inestimabile diletta carità: oggi confondi la superbia umana, a vedere che tu, Re de' re, vieni umiliato sopra la bestia, cacciato con tanto vitoperio!" (Letter 105, II, 140). Noffke locates this letter in late March 1372, probably near Palm Sunday, March 21.

much this Advent."¹²² In several letters, she speaks of the Paschal time, as in her letter to certain Benedictine novices: "He showed this at the supper on Holy Thursday, when He said, 'With desire I have desired to have this Passover with you, before I died.'"¹²³

References to the celebration of particular feasts are especially evident in the prayers. Thus Catherine prayed *Oratio XXIII*, which was transcribed by Raimondo, on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, January 25, 1377. Likewise, the text of *Oratio V* indicates the Feast of the Apostle Thomas, December 21, 1378. *Oratio VI*, with its prayers for the papal basilica and pope, can be identified with the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter, February 22, 1379. *Oratio XI*, which focuses on Mary at the Annunciation, was clearly given on that feast (*oggi*) in 1379. *Oratio XIII*, with its multiple references to the liturgy of Easter week, seems to have been prayed in mid-April 1379. And the use of *oggi* in *Oratio XIV* on the Circumcision, makes it possible to associate this prayer with January 1, 1380.

With regard to the traditions of Christian spirituality, Catherine showed an interest in imitating the Egyptian fathers in the early part of her spiritual life. Raimondo says that this knowledge was by infusion: "For as to me, so unworthy, she humbly confessed, in that hidden time she learned and knew the life and habits of the holy Egyptian fathers and the actions of some saints, most especially of the blessed Dominic, not receiving this from people nor taking it from reading, but only by the infusion of the Holy Spirit."¹²⁴ In *Il Dialogo*, however, the Father twice reminds her of incidents she had read in the lives of the fathers, most likely in Domenico Cavalca's *Le Vite dei Santi Padri*.¹²⁵

In ascribing infused knowledge to her, Raimondo may be referring to her inspired comprehension of the fathers and the saints, which went beyond the stories she could have received from other sources. Cavalca's *Vite* includes an adaptation of Athanasius' *Vita Antonii*, with which Catherine appears to be familiar. Her letter to

¹²² "Nel corpo ha proveduto molto in questo Avvento...." (Letter 119, II, 190). This letter was written to her friend, Alessa dei Saracini while Catherine was at Rocca. Noffke places the letter between November 29 and December 24, 1377.

¹²³ "Questo manifestò nella cena del Giovedì Santò, quando disse: 'Con desiderio ho desiderato di far Pasqua con voi, prima ch'io muoia'" (Letter 36, I, 137). This letter, written to certain novices at Monte Oliveto, is considered by Noffke to have been written in Holy Week, April 6-12, 1376.

¹²⁴ "Prout enim mihi nimis indigno ipsa humiliter est confessa, in secreto illo tempore vitam et mores sanctorum Patrum Aegyptiorum, necnon et gesta quorundam Sanctorum et potissime B. Dominici, nullo tradente hominum nullaque praecedente lectione, sola sancti Spiritus infusione, didicit et cognovit...." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, I, xxxi, 870.

¹²⁵ "Questo sai, se bene ti ricorda, d'aver letto nella vita dei santi padri..." (*Il Dialogo*, CXLI, 456). Also, "Bene il mostrò quello che si legge in Vita Patrum" (*Il Dialogo*, CLXV, 574).

the Augustinian, Frate Antonio da Nizza, appeals to the example of Antony.¹²⁶ D'Urso has shown the similarity between Antony's experience of temptation and the advice Catherine gives Suor Bartolomea della Seta with regard to temptation.¹²⁷ Arrigo Levasti notes that these writings must have confirmed the young Catherine in her solitary vocation: "These *Vite* frequently celebrate the exaltation of solitude, precisely what Catherine was seeking."¹²⁸

Catherine had disciples among different religious orders, representing distinct traditions, such as the Benedictines, Carthusians, Vallombrosans, Franciscans, and Augustinians, in addition to the Dominicans. Some of the intellectual religious in Siena were initially opposed to Catherine, disregarding her as an uneducated lay woman, but even several of these became her supporters. Lazzarino da Pisa was the lector at the Franciscan *studium* in Siena, who visited Catherine with the intention of discrediting her and then became her disciple.¹²⁹ Similarly, Gabriele da Volterra, the Franciscan provincial of Tuscany and the inquisitor general in Siena, approached Catherine, along with the Augustinian Giovanni Tantucci,¹³⁰ intending to expose her but both succumbed to her influence. Catherine frequently discussed theological issues with the priests in her circle and thus she was cognizant of the different traditions of the religious orders. Caffarini in his deposition in the *Processus* recalls the remark of Raimondo that "he had absorbed more theology conversing with the virgin, than he had previously learned."¹³¹

Benedict Hackett, O.S.A., maintains that the major influence on Catherine's spirituality in her early years was the English Augustinian, William Flete. Flete was often referred to as "il baccelliere," even by Catherine. Flete had studied at

¹²⁶ "Siccome faceva 'l glorioso santo Antonio..." (Letter 328, V, 79). Noffke suggests a date between January 5 and 10, 1379 for this letter.

¹²⁷ Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., "Le tentazioni di S. Antonio," *S. Caterina da Siena* n.s. 9/2-3 (1968): 34-39.

¹²⁸ "Queste *Vite* contenevano sovente, l'esaltazione della solitudine, proprio quella che Caterina cercava." Arrigo Levasti, "Prime manifestazioni di pietà," *S. Caterina da Siena* 1/1 (1949): 6.

¹²⁹ Catherine's letter to Frate Lazzarino demonstrates her affection for the Franciscans. She refers to St. Francis as "padre nostro S. Francesco" in accord with the Dominican custom. See Letter 225, III, 292. Noffke places this letter after April 1, 1375, and possibly soon after Pentecost, June 10.

¹³⁰ Tantucci was referred to as "il Maestro." Catherine herself refers to him by this title. He had studied at the University of Cambridge but probably received his degree of Master of Sacred Theology from the University of Bologna. Tantucci is also called Giovanni Terzo to distinguish him from two other Augustinian friars at Siena. Tantucci traveled with Catherine to Avignon and was with her in Rome. It was he who made an attempt to deliver a eulogy in the Minerva after her death, but could not be heard because of the noise of the crowd. He concluded that Catherine's life was itself her eulogy.

¹³¹ "[Q]uod plus de theologia auferat conversando cum virgine quam antea didicisset." *Il Processo Castellano*, 118.

the Augustinian *studium generale*, located at the University of Cambridge. On September 8, 1359, Matteo d'Ascoli, the prior general of the Augustinians, gave Flete permission to retire to the seclusion of the Augustinian convent at Lecceto or Selva del Lago, four miles from Siena. At Lecceto, the eremitical traditions of the Friars Hermits of St. Augustine could be found. Flete customarily spent his days in the woods, retiring to the convent in the evening. Among her six letters to Flete,¹³² there is one in which Catherine urges him to be more generous in offering his services to his prior as well as to be more sensitive to the needs of his brothers and less solicitous about his own consolations in preserving his solitude.¹³³

A passage in the *Processus* conflicts with a passage in *I Miracoli* as to whether Catherine actually knew Flete before 1374. The year is significant because Raimondo became her director in May of that year. Bartolomeo Dominici, in his deposition for the *Processus*, recalls an incident that happened on January 25, 1368, when Frater Donatus asked Catherine to go with him to visit William Flete. Dominici remarks: "She, because she was much attached to that holy hermit, immediately responded yes, though she had not intended to go before then."¹³⁴ *I Miracoli*, on the other hand, declares that at the time of its composition (October 1374), Catherine and Flete had never seen each other.¹³⁵ It is possible that the anonymous Florentine author of *I Miracoli* may be inaccurate on this point. Nevertheless, Catherine's freedom to seek out spiritual teachers in her early years may have been limited by her first confessor, Tommaso dalla Fonte. According to the *Supplementum*, this confessor discouraged her from even going to churches other than San Domenico.¹³⁶ On the other hand, Hackett recalls Flete's reputation as a master of the spiritual life, particularly in the area of temptation on which he had written a treatise, "De Remediis contra Tentationes." Hackett proposes that Frate Tommaso may have encouraged Catherine to speak with Flete at the time of her great temptations.¹³⁷

Hackett is convinced that Flete's influence can be seen especially in Catherine's first twenty-one letters.¹³⁸ Those letters, Hackett maintains, are particularly rich in

¹³² Catherine's letters to Flete are 64, 66, 77, 227, 293, and 326.

¹³³ Letter 77, II, 23-27. Noffke dates this letter between March 25 and April 6, 1376.

¹³⁴ "Ipsa, quia multum afficiebatur ad illum sanctum eremitam, statim respondit quod sic, licet pro tunc non intenderet ire." *Il Processo Castellano*, 307.

¹³⁵ "Questi non vide mai la Caterina, nè ella lui, ma anno conocimiento l'uno dell'altro per istinto di Spirito Santo, in tanto che l'uno parla de' fatti dell'altro con solennità e con grande reverenzia, qualle più puote." Anonimo Fiorentino, *I Miracoli*, 15.

¹³⁶ "Sed confessor respondit sibi dando sibi negativam supra dicto accessu, eique mandando quod iret ad ecclesiam de Campo Regio de Senis ordinis predicatorum, quemadmodum solita erat." Tommaso di Antonio da Siena, *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, vi, 115.

¹³⁷ Benedict Hackett, O.S.A., *William Flete, O.S.A. and Catherine of Siena: Masters of Fourteenth Century Spirituality* (Villanova, PA: Augustinian Press, 1992), 83.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

Augustinian themes such as Augustine's teaching that the three powers of the soul, memory, understanding, and will, image the Persons of the Trinity, as well as Catherine's emphasis on self knowledge,¹³⁹ and the portrayal of sin as not having being.¹⁴⁰

Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., argues that the use of the powers of the soul as images of the Trinity does not necessarily imply the influence of the Augustinians, since the concept had become the common patrimony of the Church's teachers and may also be found in Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas. D'Urso acknowledges that Catherine is in accord with Augustine in using terms of attribution and participation when describing the powers of the soul and the Trinity. When she writes, however, that power, wisdom, and love are "appropriated" to the Trinity she is using a term added by scholastic theology.¹⁴¹

Given that Catherine was a Dominican, the influence of the Dominicans certainly is extensive. Massimo Petrocchi attests to Catherine's Dominican roots: "There is much discussion on the sources of Saint Catherine. There are certainly also Augustinian sources and Franciscan sources (for example Ubertino da Casale), but it is clear that the general and central foundation of her spirituality is purely Dominican."¹⁴² The presence of the friars, whose priory was situated up the hill from her home, was felt even in Catherine's childhood. Raimondo wrote of her affection as a child: "On account of this, she began to reverence that Order so much, that when the brothers of the Order passed on the road near her home, seeing it, she noted the place where they set their feet, and after they went, she kissed the footprints humbly and devoutly."¹⁴³ As a *Mantellata*, she received formation from the Dominicans, since the rule required the tertiaries to gather on the first Friday of

¹³⁹ "Noverim te, noverim me." "Let me know myself, let me know Thee..." St. Augustine, *Soliloquies*, II, 1 in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, VII, First Series (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 547.

¹⁴⁰ "Peccatum nihil est, et nihil fiunt homines cum peccant." *In Joannis Evangelium*, 1, 13; PL 35, 1385. "Sin, indeed, was not made by Him, and it is plain that sin is nothing, and men become nothing when they sin." *Tractates on the Gospel according to St. John*, I, 13, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, VII, First Series (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 11.

¹⁴¹ Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., "I maestri di S. Caterina," *Nuovi Studi Cateriniani* 1 (1984): 117. See Letter 94, II, 95: "Con la potenza che è appropriata al Padre, e con la sapienza che è appropriata al Figliuolo, e con la benevolenza e amore che è appropriata allo Spirito Santo."

¹⁴² "Molto si è discusso sulle fonti di Santa Caterina. Sono certamente anche fonti agostiniane e fonti francescane (ad esempio Ubertino da Casale), ma è chiaro che l'impianto centrale e generale della sua spiritualità è puramente domenicano." Petrocchi, *Storia della spiritualità italiana*, 67.

¹⁴³ "Propter quod coepit intantum revereri Ordinem illum, quod quando Fratres ejusdem Ordinis, ipsa vidente, per viam coram domo sua transibant, notabat loca ubi ponebant pedes; et postquam transiverant, osculabatur pedum ipsorum vestigia humiliter et devote." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, I, xxxviii, 872.

the month for Mass and for an instruction.¹⁴⁴ Her confessors, Tommaso dalla Fonte, Bartolomeo Dominici, and Raimondo da Capua were Dominicans. The particular interest she gives in *Il Dialogo* to the three canonized Dominicans, Dominic, Peter (Martyr) of Verona, and Thomas, illustrates the strong bond she felt with the Dominican family.

Catherine would have heard the Dominicans preach each day. The *Supplementum* indicates that there was daily preaching at San Domenico: "And rising, she went, at once, with no little desire to the church, and when she entered the preaching was being given, as the custom in the Sienese convent of the Order of Preachers was that of preaching in the morning."¹⁴⁵ D'Urso regards this preaching as especially formative: "The preaching in San Domenico is perhaps the most important font of the theological notions, of the culture, and also the mentality of St. Catherine."¹⁴⁶ Even while Catherine was learning from the Dominicans, she was also teaching them. Bartolomeo Dominici informs us in the *Processus*: "Some thought that we brothers taught her, however, as I have said, it was to the contrary."¹⁴⁷

Catherine's relationship to Thomas Aquinas reflects a particular stage in the developing appreciation of Thomas that took place within the Dominican Order. A few years after Thomas's death in 1274, the bishop of Paris, in 1277, condemned some of Aquinas's teachings. Not long afterwards the Dominican Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Kilwardby, also condemned some of Aquinas's propositions. The condemnations were considered unfair by the Dominicans and spurred them to a greater support for Thomas's teachings. The general chapter in 1286 at Paris obliged Dominicans to study and promote the teachings of Thomas. The general chapter at Saragozza, in 1309, established Thomas's works as the norm for the conventual studies. The chapter at Metz reaffirmed the position of Thomas's writings as

¹⁴⁴ "In ciaschuna prima sesta feria di ciaschuno mese dell'anno si raguneranno tutte le suore a la chiesa de' frati Predicatori di quello luogho, a udire insiemenente la messa e la parola di Dio dal maestro o suo vicario deputato alloro, el quale doppo la santa exortazione lo' leggerà e esporrà questa regola et informaralle di tutto quello che debbano fare, e correggiaralle de li loro eccessi e de le loro transgressioni." Tommaso di Antonio da Siena [Tommaso Nacci Caffarini], *Tractatus de ordine FF. de paenitentia S. Dominici di Fra Tommaso da Siena "Caffarini,"* in *Fontes vitae S. Catharinae Senensis historici*, ed. M. H. Laurent, O.P., Vol. XXI (Siena: R. Università di Siena, Cattedra Cateriniana, 1938), 177.

¹⁴⁵ "Et surgens, statim venit cum non parvo desiderio ad ecclesiam, et dum intraret predicabatur, ut de more est in conventu senesi ordinis predicatorum, quod de mane predicatur." *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, vi, 113-114.

¹⁴⁶ "La predicazione in S. Domenico è forse la fonte più importante delle nozioni teologiche, della cultura e anche della mentalità di S. Caterina." Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., "I maestri di S. Caterina," 119.

¹⁴⁷ "Aliqui autem emuli putabant quod nos fratres doceremus eam, cum tamen, ut iam dixi esset e contrario." *Il Processo Castellano*, 305.

the official theology of the Order in 1313. Chapters at London in 1314, and at Bologna in 1315, similarly upheld Thomas as the standard for study in the Order. Clement VI, in 1346, told the Dominicans not to depart from the teachings of St. Thomas.

Thomas was honored by the Order not only as a teacher but also as a saint. In Catherine's time, San Domenico in Siena possessed a painting depicting Thomas, as did other Dominican churches with which Catherine was familiar, S. Maria Novella in Florence and S. Caterina in Pisa. In *Il Dialogo*, Catherine expressed her veneration for Thomas in the words of the Father: "You have the glorious Thomas Aquinas who had his knowledge more through the study of prayer and the raising of the mind and the light of the understanding than through human study. He was a light that I set in the mystic body of holy Church, dispelling the darkness of error."¹⁴⁸ As has been shown, Catherine credited St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John the Evangelist with obtaining for her the gift of writing.

Despite Catherine's devotion to Thomas, some scholars doubt that his teachings actually affected her writings. Thus, Louis Canet states his conviction: "There is not in Saint Catherine, a word, I say, a single word, that reveals a specifically Thomistic influence."¹⁴⁹ Hackett similarly plays down the role of Thomas in Catherine's thought: "It is also evident that the theological milieu in which she moved and which exercised in human terms the most potent influence on her mystical teaching was not the scholastic world, still less was the setting Thomistic. Her spiritual thought was very much the product of the writings of near contemporary Italian authors, though ultimately, as far as non-scriptural sources go, Augustine was her master."¹⁵⁰

Most authorities, however, recognize that there are definitive areas of correspondence between Thomas and Catherine. Catherine's principal themes have Thomistic foundations. Thus, Catherine frequently returns to the principle that only God has existence of Himself, an idea that is developed in Thomas.¹⁵¹ Catherine

¹⁴⁸ "Unde avete del glorioso Tomaso d'Aquino che la scienza sua ebbe più per studio d'orazione ed elevazione di mente e lume d'intelletto, che per studio umano; il quale fu uno lume che Io ò messo nel corpo mistico della santa Chiesa" (*Il Dialogo*, XCVI, 264).

¹⁴⁹ "Il n'y a pas chez sainte Catherine un mot, je dis un seul mot, qui décèle un influence spécifiquement thomiste." Robert Fawtier & Louis Canet, *La double expérience de Catherine Benincasa (Sainte Catherine de Sienne)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 248.

¹⁵⁰ Benedict Hackett, O.S.A., "Simone Fidate da Cascia and the Doctrine of St. Catherine of Siena," *Augustiniana* 16 (1966): 414.

¹⁵¹ Catherine depicts the Father saying: "Io sono colui che só, e voi not sete per voi medesimi, se non quanto sete fatti da me, il quale só creatore di tutte le cose che partecipano essere" (*Il Dialogo*, XVIII, 56). Thomas presented the principle in this form: "[I]ta illud quod habet esse et non est esse est ens per participationem...Si igitur non sit suum esse, erit ens per participationem et non per essentiam. Non ergo erit primum ens. Est igitur Deus suum esse et non solum sua essentia" (I, 3, 4).

echoes Thomas's position that all the virtues have life through charity.¹⁵² Catherine follows Thomas in identifying the act of loving the neighbor with the act of loving God.¹⁵³ Catherine affirms the desire for goodness that is present even in wrong human choices, as does Thomas.¹⁵⁴ Catherine emphasizes the aspect of vision in eternal beatitude similar to Thomas.¹⁵⁵ Catherine asserts the priority of God's love as does Thomas.¹⁵⁶ The accord of Catherine with Thomas is especially evident with regard to original sin, the need for grace, the incarnation, the atonement, and redemption.

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 2, trans. Timothy McDermott, O.P. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964), 32.

¹⁵² Thomas asserted: "Per caritatem ordinantur actus omnium aliarum virtutum ad ultimum finem. Et secundum hoc ipsa dat formam actibus omnium aliarum virtutum. Et pro tanto dicitur esse forma virtutum, nam et ipsae virtutes dicuntur in ordine ad actus formatos" (II, II, 23, 8). Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 34, trans. R. J. Batten, O.P. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1974), 32. In another article, Thomas held, "Nulla vera virtus potest esse sine caritate" (II II, 23, 7). *Ibid.*, 28. Catherine had written, "Tutte le virtù procedono dalla carità, e da essa hanno vita" (Letter 321, V, 64). In another letter, she insisted, "Sapete, diletissima mia suora, che neuna virtù è viva senza la carità" (Letter 97, II, 110). In *Il Dialogo*, she maintained, "Ogni perfezione ed ogni virtù procede dalla carità" (*Il Dialogo*, LXIII, 160).

¹⁵³ In *Il Dialogo*, Catherine wrote in the Father's name, "[P]erchè Io ti dissi che nel prossimo, cioè nella carità sua, si fondavano tutte le virtù, e così è la verità. Io si ti dissi che la carità dava vita a tutte le virtù, e così è, ché niuna virtù si può avere senza la carità, cioè che la virtù s'acquisti per puro amore di me" (*Il Dialogo*, VII, 21). Thomas asserted, "Ratio autem diligendi proximum Deus est: hoc enim debemus in proximo diligere ut in Deo sit. Unde manifestum est quod idem specie actus est quo diligitur Deus, et quo diligitur proximus. Et propter hoc habitus caritatis non solum se extendit ad dilectionem Dei, sed etiam ad dilectionem proximi" (II, II, 25, 1). Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 34, trans. R. J. Batten, O.P. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1974), 82.

¹⁵⁴ Catherine wrote: "L'anima di sua natura sempre appetisce bene" (*Il Dialogo*, XLIV, 113). Thomas explained: "Quidquid homo appetit, appetit sub ratione boni" (I, II, 1, 6). Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 16, trans. Thomas Gilby, O.P. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969), 22. In another instance, Thomas writes, "Malum nunquam amatur nisi sub ratione boni" (I, II, 27, 1 ad 1). Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 19, trans. Eric D'Arcy (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1967), 74-76.

¹⁵⁵ "L'amore suo ci ha fatti degni di vederlo a faccia a faccia nel qual vedere sta la nostra beatitudine" (Letter 345, V, 158). Thomas wrote: "Dicendum quod ultima et perfecta beatitudo non potest esse nisi in visione divinae essentia" (I, II, 3, ad 8). Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 16, trans. Thomas Gilby, O.P. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969), 84.

¹⁵⁶ Catherine told the Father: "[T]u m'amasti senza essere amato da me" (*Il Dialogo*, CVIII, 301). In a letter, she wrote to Bernabò Visconti, the tyrant of Milan: "Guardate, che prima fusti amato, che voi non amasti: perocchè ragguardando Dio in sè medesimo, innamorossi della bellezza della sua creatura, mosso dal fuoco dell'instimabile sua carità, solo per questo fine, perchè ella avesse vita eterna e godesse quel bene infinito che Dio godeva in sè medesimo" (Letter 28, I, 95). Thomas declared: "Sed amor Dei est infudens et creans bonitatem in rebus" (I, 20, 2). Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 5, trans. Thomas Gilby, O.P. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1966), 60.

While the conformity of Thomas and Catherine in a number of areas might be explained as a sharing in the common heritage, her adherence to Thomas with regard to the subtle relationship between the will and the understanding or intellect indicates something other than a coincidental use of a common tradition. Furthermore, Catherine's reliance on this particular aspect of Thomas's thought has ramifications throughout her writings.

Thomas follows Aristotle in emphasizing the understanding's role in moving the will to action. While Thomas's explanation of the interaction of the understanding and the will is complex, he does assert the primacy of reason over the will, in contrast to Bonaventure. Thomas states, "The intellect in itself and simply speaking is higher and nobler than the will."¹⁵⁷ Similarly, Catherine writes in *Il Dialogo*, "The intellect is the noblest part of the soul."¹⁵⁸

Catherine frequently returns to the principle that the will follows upon the understanding, as she does in Letter 77 writing to William Flete, "Who does not know is not able to love and who knows, so loves."¹⁵⁹ In *Il Dialogo*, she writes of "the affection that goes after the understanding."¹⁶⁰ Because Catherine is convinced that the will follows the intellect, she is unrelenting in her efforts to convince others of the truth about God in order that they might grow in love for God.

It would be a mistake to conclude from the Thomistic elements in her writings that Catherine's knowledge of Thomas was extensive. Kenelm Foster, for one, suggests that the Thomistic influence on Catherine should not be overstated: "To be sure, some of her expressions (*essere, potenza*, etc.) have a scholastic ring, but this was natural given her environment. It would be absurd to suppose that she understood the philosophy of Aquinas philosophically. She had no time for philosophy as such."¹⁶¹

Marie-Hyacinthe Laurent, O.P., likewise, cautions: "To make Catherine of Siena a Thomist, because some aspects of her doctrine recall the intellectual stance of the Common Doctor, signifies ignorance of one of the most fundamental laws of historiography: before reviving a personage it is necessary to reconstitute the envi-

¹⁵⁷ "Sequitur quod secundum se et simpliciter intellectus sit altior et nobilior voluntate" (I, 82, 3). Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 11, trans. Thomas Sutter (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1970), 224. Thomas shows the complexity of the relationship between the intellect and the will, as he notes in the same article that, while the intellect is the higher power in a simple sense, in actuality "the love of God is better than the knowledge of God, whereas the knowledge of physical things is better than loving them" (I, 82, 3). *Ibid.*, 225.

¹⁵⁸ "Lo 'ntelletto è la più nobile parte dell'anima" (*Il Dialogo*, LI, 135).

¹⁵⁹ "Chi non cognosce non può amare, e chi cognosce si ama" (Letter 77, II, 24). Noffke would date this letter between late March and very early April 1376.

¹⁶⁰ "L'affetto che va dietro all'intelletto" (*Il Dialogo*, XCVI, 263).

¹⁶¹ Kenelm Foster, O.P., "St. Catherine's Teaching on Christ," *Life of the Spirit* 16 (1962): 312-313.

ronment where she lived."¹⁶² Laurent, is not, of course, dismissing the possibility of a Thomistic influence in Catherine's writings but he is asserting the need to examine Catherine in the context of her time and to consider the Thomistic elements in her writings with the nuances appropriate to her time.

Catherine could not have read Thomas's writings herself because she did not know Latin, as is illustrated by her need of Raimondo to act as her interpreter at the papal court in Avignon. Catherine's exposure to Thomas came through the Dominicans. This fact raises the question as to the way in which the Dominicans with whom she was involved were influenced by Thomas. There is evidence that there was an early enthusiasm for Thomas among the Italian Dominicans. At the general chapter at Perugia in 1308, the Italian brothers were reprimanded for substituting the *Summa Theologiae* in the place of the *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae* of Peter Lombard, the standard text of medieval theological study.¹⁶³

There were particular reasons for the Sieneese Dominicans to have an allegiance to Thomas. He, like them, had been a member of the Roman province of the Order. Also, the revered Sieneese Dominican, Blessed Ambrose Sansedoni (1220-1286), whose body was buried in San Domenico, had been a fellow student with Aquinas.

Giacinto D'Urso notices that certain of Catherine's teachings differ from particular teachings of Thomas.¹⁶⁴ Thus, Catherine apparently did not know of Thomas's concept of charity as friendship; she does not make a clear distinction between the soul and its powers, or of grace and charity; and she uses an example of the sun to depict the Eucharist in *Il Dialogo* 110. This particular example is repudiated in the *Summa*.¹⁶⁵ Catherine does not seem aware that, in Thomas's fuller explanation, the imaging of the Trinity is primarily in the actions and only secondarily in the powers of the soul,¹⁶⁶ a teaching that Thomas asserts to be what Augustine really meant.¹⁶⁷

D'Urso observes that the differences between Catherine and Thomas exist with the *Summa* but not with Thomas's earlier work, his *Commentum Sententiarum*. For instance, Thomas accepts the threefold image of the Trinity in the soul in the *Com-*

¹⁶² "Fare di Caterina da Siena una 'tomista,' perchè alcuni aspetti della sua dottrina ricordano l'intellettualismo del Dottore Comune, significa ignorare una delle leggi più fondamentali della storiografia: prima di risuscitare un personaggio è necessario ricostituire l'ambiente dove ha vissuto." Marie-Hyacinthe Laurent, O.P., "Santa Caterina da Siena e il Padre Gorce," *Vita Cristiana* 10 (1938): 607-608.

¹⁶³ Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., "Le savoir théologique chez les premiers thomistes," in *Saint Thomas au XIV siècle, Revue Thomiste* (1997): 23-24.

¹⁶⁴ Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., "Il pensiero di S. Caterina e le sue fonti," *Orbis et Urbis* (Roma: Sacra Rituum Congregatione, 1969), 267.

¹⁶⁵ *Summa Theologiae*, III, 76, 3.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 93, 7.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 93, 7, ad 3.

*mentum Sententiarum*¹⁶⁸ but, under the influence of Aristotle, he minimizes the role of memory in the *De Veritate*¹⁶⁹ and in the *Summa Theologiae*.¹⁷⁰

Among the Italian Dominicans in the second half of the fourteenth century, the *Sententiae* of Peter Lombard continued to be the common manual of theology. Bartolomeo Dominici, Catherine's second confessor, mentions in the *Processus* that he had read the course of *Sententiae*.¹⁷¹ D'Urso maintains that the Siense Dominicans were more familiar with Thomas's *Commentum Sententiarum* than with the *Summa Theologiae*: "I am able to recount the system used, that is substantial fidelity to Peter Lombard, keeping perhaps more of an eye on the *Commentum* of Saint Thomas than on the *Summa*. I think that in Catherine's time, this was to a great part the Thomism to be found in the Siense convent."¹⁷² Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., observes: "Even in the fifteenth century, the first great commentator on Thomas, Capreolis, the *princeps thomistarum*, comments on the *Sentences* and not on the *Summa*."¹⁷³

It should be noted also that the distinctions between Thomas and Augustine have much ambiguity. For example, Ceslaus Velecky, O.P., describing the influence of the Fathers in Thomas's treatise on the Trinity in the *Summa Theologiae*, comments: "The first among them is St. Augustine who accounts for about as many quotations as the rest of the Fathers put together and which outnumber the Scriptural quotations."¹⁷⁴ Bonnie Kent, in her book *Virtues of the Will: The Transformation of Ethics in the Later Thirteenth Century*, has questioned whether the customary demarcation between the Aristotelian and Augustinian schools that is thought to have taken place in the last quarter of the thirteenth century has been exaggerated. Her position is that the "Augustinian" schools were more Aristotelian, and the

¹⁶⁸ *Commentum Sententiarum*. Sent. I, dist.III, q.II, and Sent. II, dist. XVI, q.I.

¹⁶⁹ *De Veritate*, q.X, 1-3.

¹⁷⁰ "[P]atet quod imagem divinae Trinitatis potius ponit in intelligentia et voluntate actuali quam secundum quod sunt in habituali retentione memoriae; licet etiam quantum ad hoc aliquo modo sit imago Trinitatis in anima" (I, 93, 7, ad 3). Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 13, trans. Edmund Hill, O.P. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964), 74.

¹⁷¹ "Unde et me, qui eodem tempore ibidem cursorie Sententias legebam...." *Il Processo Castellano*, 331.

¹⁷² "[M]a ho pututo riscontrarvi il metodo usato, cioè sostanziale fedeltà a Pietro Lombardo, tenendo forse un po' d'occhio il commento di S. Tommaso più che la Somma. Penso che, nel periodo cateriniano, questo in gran parte fosse il tomismo reperibile nel convento senese." Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., "Il pensiero di S. Caterina e le sue fonti," *Orbis et Urbis* (Roma: Sacra Rituum Congregazione, 1969), 267.

¹⁷³ Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. I, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1996), 47.

¹⁷⁴ Ceslaus Velecky, O.P., "Following the Fathers," Appendix 3 in St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, VI (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 132-133.

"Aristotelian" schools were more Augustinian than some scholars, such as Gilson, have suggested.¹⁷⁵ Torrell points out that the thirteenth-century Dominicans who embraced Aristotle did not consider themselves to be rejecting Augustine, rather "[with] Thomas Aquinas at their head, [they] considered themselves legitimate heirs of St. Augustine as well."¹⁷⁶

In addition to the influence of Thomas, Catherine's writings give evidence of multiple influences which were not always easy to separate. Sometimes, she designates a particular source. Thus, for example, she explicitly quotes Augustine in Letters 96, 97, 260, 309; Gregory in Letters 83 and 258 and in *Il Dialogo*, 73; and Bernard in Letters 30, 97, and 258.

At other times, however, the sources of her ideas are not as evident. Regarding the difficulty of tracing the sources, Dupré Theseider observes: "There is a constant phenomenon in medieval texts, whereby customarily 'authorities' are transcribed without any indication of the origin; even more frequently they are 'recollections,' citations made by memory, hence more or less exact, particularly those from well-known sources. They are naturally the most difficult to verify."¹⁷⁷ In his collection of eighty-eight of the earliest letters, Dupré gives about three hundred citations. One is directly from St. Bernard. The others are indirect. Dupré identifies passages inspired by Augustine about fifty times, Bernard about forty times, Gregory thirteen times, and Aquinas twelve times.

D'Urso points out that, although Catherine uses some of the more common phrases of the Fathers of the Church, she does not appear to know the context of the original. He believes that it is clear that she had not read the works from which they came but heard these phrases repeated one or more time in preaching or read them in spiritual books.¹⁷⁸ Dupré similarly observes:

In general the culture of Catherine is of an indirect nature. I mean to say that she – who, even knowing how to read, must not have found it easy to apply herself directly to the Patristic works and to the remaining religious literature, almost all of which was in Latin – derived it, for the most part, from familiarity with the reli-

¹⁷⁵ Bonnie Kent, *Virtues of the Will: The Transformation of Ethics in the Late Thirteenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995).

¹⁷⁶ Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 39.

¹⁷⁷ "Ma è fenomeno costante nei testi medievali, dove per solito le 'autorità' vengono trascritte senza indicazione di provenienza; più frequenti ancora sono i 'richeggiamenti', le citazioni fatte a memoria, quindi più o meno esatte, da testi particolarmente ben conosciuti. Sono naturalmente le più difficili a riscontrare." Eugenio Dupré Theseider, "Sulla composizione del *Dialogo*," 200-201, n. 1.

¹⁷⁸ "A questo proposito osservo che, avendo voluto controllare alcune delle frasi più comuni prese dai Padri della Chiesa, ho trovato che la scrittrice non mostra mai di conoscere il contesto dell'originale. È chiaro che non ha letto l'opera da cui vengono, ma ha sentito una o più volte quelle frasi, spesso ripetute nelle prediche, o le ha lette nei libri spirituali." Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., "Il pensiero di S. Caterina e le sue fonti," *Sapienza* 7 (1954): 378.

gious who were near, be it Augustinian, Dominican, or Franciscan. From these she learned how to deal with that immense patrimony of textual references, repeated ad infinitum, from which they wove the sermons (like those of Frate Giordano) and the writings of devout, ascetical, and theological nature.¹⁷⁹

Dupré maintains that the influence of the Italian spiritual authors is exceptionally prevalent. Thus in the eighty-eight letters he published, Dupré detects the influence of Domenico Cavalca seventy times, Giordano da Rivalto¹⁸⁰ forty times, Giovanni Colombini¹⁸¹ about twenty times, and Bianco da Siena¹⁸² about twenty times. Dupré notes that the parallels between Catherine's writings and some of these spiritual writers does not necessarily imply derivation as much as indications of a shared heritage.¹⁸³

Hackett argues that, among the popular religious authors, Simone Fidati da Cascia was a major influence on Catherine. Simone (1290-1348) was an Augustinian preacher who had a great influence on Italian spirituality through his treatises *Vita cristiana* and *Regola spirituale*, his letters, and his life of Christ in fourteen volumes, *De gestis domini salvatoris*. Hackett credits the Italian version of *De gestis* for some of Catherine's knowledge of St. Bernard.¹⁸⁴ He writes:

While it is undeniable that their ideas were shared to some extent by other writers such as Cavalca, it is equally true that Simone's works alone provide the materials for a number of Catherine's most characteristic statements, or rather her singular approach to and treatment of various aspects of Christian thought... At all events the writings of Simone Fidati deserve to be placed among the really important sources for Catherine's thought.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁹ "Ma in genere la cultura di Caterina è di natura indiretta. Intendo dire che ella, - che, per quanto sapesse leggere, non doveva trovare facile rivolgersi direttamente alle opere della patristica ed alla restante letteratura religiosa, quasi tutta in latino, - derivò moltissimo dalla consuetudine con i religiosi che le erano accanto, sia Agostiniani, sia Domenicani, sia Francescani. Da essi apprese a maneggiare quel cospicuo patrimonio di riferimenti testuali onde sono intessute, spesso ad infinitum, le prediche (come quelle di frate Giordano) e gli scritti di natura devota, ascetica, teologica." Eugenio Dupré Theseider, "Sulla composizione del *Dialogo*," 201, n. 1.

¹⁸⁰ Giordano (Jordan) da Rivalto (1260-1311) was a Dominican preacher in Florence. Catherine may have been familiar with a collection of his sermons.

¹⁸¹ Giovanni Colombini (1304-1367) was a married Siennese man who felt called to a penitential life. His followers, known as the Gesuati, were a charismatic religious community that emphasized evangelical poverty and penance. Most of his later years were spent outside of Siena. Catherine was friendly with the nuns of Santo Abundio, where he was buried and where his letters were preserved. His niece, Lisa, was married to Catherine's older brother, Bartolomeo.

¹⁸² Bianco da Siena, was a member of the Gesuati, who wrote mystical poetry or *Laudi*. He lived in Siena until 1370 and died in Venice in 1412.

¹⁸³ Eugenio Dupré Theseider, "Sulla composizione del *Dialogo*," 201, n. 1.

¹⁸⁴ Benedict Hackett, O.S.A., "Simone Fidate da Cascia and the Doctrine of St. Catherine of Siena," 405-406.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 413-414.

In 1953, Alvaro Grion, O.P., asserted in his work *Santa Caterina: Dottrina e fonti* that the fundamental source of Catherine's mysticism was the *Arbor vitae crucifixae Jesu* of Ubertino da Casale. Ubertino was a Franciscan preacher and author who was born in 1259 and died in 1329 or 1330. Grion's opinion that Catherine knew this scholastic Latin text either directly or indirectly has found little support among Catherinian scholars, although his exposition of Catherine's theological thought is considered excellent. Grion draws attention to Catherine's Marian teachings.

The one spiritual writer who is generally accepted as being the major influence on Catherine is the Dominican preacher, Domenico Cavalca. Cavalca was born in Vicopisano between 1260 and 1270. Most of his ministry was done in Pisa, where he died in October 1342. His major work is the *Lo Specchio di Croce*. D'Urso identifies this book as the chief influence on Catherine: "But the book that has left the most numerous and most profound traces is the *Specchio di Croce*."¹⁸⁶ Cavalca had translated the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great and the *Lives of the Ancient Fathers* into Italian.¹⁸⁷

Dupré, remarking on the large number of references to Cavalca, has suggested that one would be tempted to call Cavalca the true source of Catherine.¹⁸⁸ Suzanne Noffke comments: "Her favorite author, apart from the Scriptures, seems to have been the Dominican popularizer, Domenico Cavalca, and she borrowed without qualms from his writings."¹⁸⁹ Hackett describes Cavalca as "an exponent of the Augustinian tradition of spirituality" and says of his works: "There is no doubt that

¹⁸⁶ Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., "I maestri di S. Caterina," *Nuovi Studi Cateriniani* 1 (1984): 113.

¹⁸⁷ William Hinnebusch, O.P., makes the following comments about Cavalca: "In his works a perceptible religious sentiment, a solid faith, a frank love of neighbor, a tender adherence to Christ, and a tranquil search for love and union with God find expression. Dominic is eloquent, penetrating and precise, but never personal. Nevertheless, he reveals himself as a man who deeply loves Christ and the joys of the spirit. He manifests great powers of analysis, dividing and subdividing, but falls short in synthesis and overdoes the citations and examples he draws from older works, mostly from Gregory's *Dialogues* and the *Lives of the Fathers*.... He displays a harmony, purity and fluency of style that mark him as a master of Italian prose. His poetry, however, which is found for the most part in his prose works, is of mediocre quality. The great number of manuscripts of his books show that he was one of the favorite spiritual authors of fourteenth-century Italy." William A. Hinnebusch, O.P., *The History of the Dominican Order*, vol. II (New York: Alba House, 1973), 345.

¹⁸⁸ "Notevole, a questo proposito, il gran numero di riscontri che ho additati, con le opere del Cavalca, che si sarebbe tentati di chiamare la vera fonte di Caterina." Eugenio Dupré Theseider, "Sulla composizione del *Dialogo*," 201, n. 1.

¹⁸⁹ Suzanne Noffke, O.P., "The *Dialogue*: A Window on St. Catherine's Vision," *Dominican Ashram* 2 (March 1983): 13.

these writings either directly or indirectly were used by Catherine as source material for her earliest letters which date from 1367-74."¹⁹⁰

As a preacher, Cavalca's spiritual writings may reflect what D'Urso finds typical of the Dominican preaching in Tuscany at the time: "It was a preaching at times crowded with distinctions, but mostly of a practical nature and from traditional material, material secured by numerous patristic citations, extracts often in use for centuries, like the *Catena Aurea* of St. Thomas. In general, the doctrine was Augustinian."¹⁹¹

An example of the manner by which Catherine received Augustinian ideas through Cavalca may be seen in Catherine's references to Jesus teaching upon the chair of the cross.¹⁹² Augustine uses this image: "That cross was a school. There the teacher taught the thief. The wood of the one hanging was made a chair for the teacher."¹⁹³ It is probable that Catherine found this idea in Domenico Cavalca who writes: "Christ stays on the cross as a teacher to teach upon the chair."¹⁹⁴

Kenelm Foster, on the other hand, plays down the actual influence of Cavalca: "Cavalca wrote popular devotional theology and translated selections from the Bible and the Fathers.... But the importance of a source is not to be reckoned merely by the frequency with which it is cited or echoed, and I cannot believe that Catherine's great and original mind learned much of importance from the rather pedestrian Cavalca. In any case, Cavalca was not particularly Thomist."¹⁹⁵

Catherine also shows the influence of the works of Blessed Jacobus de Voragine (1226 or 28-1298). This Dominican taught theology in Genoa, served as a prior in various houses, was the provincial of upper Italy, and was made the Archbishop of Genoa in 1292. His *Legenda Aurea* is echoed in Catherine's accounts of Sylvester and of Lawrence in *Il Dialogo*, CXIX and CLI. It seems that Catherine's knowledge of this Latin work was indirect and, on occasion, incomplete. Her Letter 123 describes a peculiar incident in which the apostle Thomas is struck and the person who struck him is strangled by an animal. The incident is found in Jacobus's *Legen-*

¹⁹⁰ Benedict Hackett, O.S.A., "Simone Fidate da Cascia," 386.

¹⁹¹ "Una predicazione a volte fitta di distinzioni, ma in genere pratica e dalla sostanza tradizionale, sostanza assicurata dalle numerose citazioni patristiche estratte spesso dalle centurie in voga, come la *Catena aurea* di S. Tommaso. Dottrina in genere agostiniana." Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., "Il pensiero di S. Caterina e le sue fonti," *Orbis et Urbis*, 264.

¹⁹² See Letters 216 and 235.

¹⁹³ "Crux illa, schola erat. Ibi docuit magister latronem. Lignum pendentis, cathedra factum est docentis" (Sermo CCXXXIX, PL 38, 1116).

¹⁹⁴ "Cristo ... sta in croce come un maestro sulla cattedra per insegnare." Domenico Cavalca, *Lo Specchio della Croce*, a cura di Tito Sante Centi, O.P. (Bologna: Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 1992), 27.

¹⁹⁵ Kenelm Foster, O.P., "St. Catherine's Teaching on Christ," *Life of the Spirit* 16 (1962): 312.

da but Jacobus adds the reservation that St. Augustine considered the episode to be apocryphal.

Perhaps of more interest are Jacobus's various collections of sermons which include three hundred and seven on the saints, one hundred fifty-nine for Sundays, and at least one for every day in Lent. The fact that approximately four hundred manuscripts of Jacobus's *Sermones* are preserved illustrates the popularity of these sermons. D'Urso maintains that the similarities between these sermons and Catherine's writings attest to their influence as transmitted through their use in other sermons and in her discussions with the priests.¹⁹⁶ Our particular interest is Jacobus's Marian writings, that is, his discourse on the sorrows of Mary and the collection of sermons on Mary entitled the *Mariale*, which he brought together when he was archbishop.

Edmund Gardner, who had already authored a work on Dante before his book on Catherine, observes an interesting affinity between the two Tuscan writers, Dante and Catherine. He states: "The resemblance at times between Catherine's phraseology as well as her thought, in the *Dialogo* as in the *Letters*, and that of Dante, is not likely to be entirely fortuitous. Although she never mentions the poet, and assuredly has never read the *Divina Commedia*, she must frequently have heard his lines quoted by her followers. Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi, at least, appears to have been a Dante student."¹⁹⁷ Neri's familiarity with Dante is supported by a letter Gionta di Grazia wrote to Neri on January 30, 1381: "If you are able to send that piece of Dante that I lent you, I beg that you send it to me."¹⁹⁸ Some scholars have identified similar characteristics and ideas in both Dante and Catherine.¹⁹⁹ To some degree, Catherine may also have found inspiration in Cassian's works and in the *Vitae Fratrum* of Gérard de Frachet, a collection of the stories of the early years of the Dominican Order.²⁰⁰

While it is clear that Catherine was influenced by a number of sources, it is also evident that she incorporated whatever she found into her own system. Giovanni

¹⁹⁶ Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., "Giacomo da Varazze, maestro di S. Caterina da Siena," in *Jacopo da Varagine: Atti del Convegno di Studi, Varazze, 13-14 Aprile 1985*, 189-205.

¹⁹⁷ Gardner, *Saint Catherine of Siena*, 366.

¹⁹⁸ "Se mi potete mandare quello pezzo del Dante che vi lassai si me lo mandate, priegovi assai" Lettera XVIII. Gionta di Grazie al Pagliarsi, "Lettera di 30 di Gienaro, 1381," *Le Lettere di S. Caterina da Siena*, VI (Misciatteli), 86-87.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Maria Teresa Balbiano d'Aramengo, "Dante e Santa Caterina," *Quaderni Cateriniani* 23 (1980): 1-15 and Alvaro Bizzicari, "Dante e Caterina da Siena: corrispondenza fra poesia e misticismo," *Rassegna di ascetica e mistica* 25/2 (1974): 207-227.

²⁰⁰ Simon Tugwell comments: "In 1260, when Gerard de Frachet completed the *Lives of the Brethren*, people looked back with a certain nostalgia, as well as a certain amusement (not to mention a certain exaggeration), to the days when the brethren were habitually to be found in church." Simon Tugwell, O.P., *Early Dominicans* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 107, n.27.

Getto comments on her use of the sources: "A more creatively free and aristocratically original spirit penetrates into the old and rigid forms, and renews and transfigures them."²⁰¹ Gabriella Anodal succinctly expresses Catherine's ability to incorporate ideas: "Everything is transfigured, 'Catherineized.'"²⁰² Everything Catherine discovers is ordered by Catherine's theological understanding. Giuliana Cavallini remarks: "What is characteristic of Catherine is her way of absorbing and of rendering what she receives from outside. The things that enter into her mind are found to be immersed, so to speak, in the light of the divine learning that already fills her completely and in that they are naturally inserted."²⁰³

The Development of Critical Scholarship in Catherinian Studies

The writings of the French scholar, Robert Fawtier, have served as a catalyst to the development of a more scientific approach to Catherine's writings. In 1921, Fawtier challenged a number of traditional assumptions about Catherine in his *Sainte Catherine de Sienne. Essai de critique des sources. I. Sources hagiographiques*. Fawtier suggested that the Dominicans had manipulated the information in their accounts because of their vested interests, such as promoting Catherine's canonization, obtaining approval of the third order rule, supporting the cause of the Roman claimant, and advancing a Dominican equivalent to Francis of Assisi. From the hagiographic materials of her disciples, Fawtier accepts only those facts that can be documented elsewhere. Accepting only what can be proved, he insists: "We leave aside entirely any supernatural element."²⁰⁴

Fawtier is extremely suspicious of Raimondo and of Caffarini. He believes that their determination to portray Catherine according to the criteria of medieval hagiography was more important to them than was their intention to preserve historical accuracy. Thus, he questions Raimondo's reliability in the *Legenda*, describing it as "a work in which it is extremely difficult to recover the historic truth."²⁰⁵ Since Caffarini was involved in every aspect of the *Processus*, Fawtier regards the collec-

²⁰¹ "Uno spirito più creativamente libero ed aristocraticamente originale penetra nelle vecchie e rigide forme, e le rinnova e transfigura." Giovanni Getto, *Letteratura Religiosa del Trecento*, 178.

²⁰² "Tutto è come trasfigurato 'caterinizzato.'" Gabriella Anodal, "Il linguaggio catheriniano," *Nuovi Studi Cateriniani* 1 (1984): 126.

²⁰³ "Ma quel che è caratteristico di Caterina è il suo modo di assorbire e di rendere quel che riceve dal di fuori: le cose che entrano nella sua mente si trovano immerse, per così, nella luce dell'insegnamento divino che già tutta la riempie, e in quella s'inseriscono naturalmente." Giuliana Cavallini, introduction to *Il Dialogo*, XXXVIII.

²⁰⁴ "[N]ous laisserons entièrement de côté l'élément surnaturel." Robert Fawtier, *Sainte Catherine de Sienne. Essai de critique des sources. I. Sources hagiographiques* (Paris: De Boccard, 1921), xiii.

²⁰⁵ "Le résultat est une œuvre où il est extrêmement difficile de retrouver la vérité historique." *Ibid.*, 214.

tion of depositions to be so flawed as to be "nothing but a public demonstration organized to push through the canonization, a parody of a process."²⁰⁶ He dismisses the biographical writings of her disciples by saying: "In a word, it seems that there is truly very little to be drawn from the Catherinian hagiographies, and, in every case, it is so tendentious that one could not accept the smallest assertion, unless it is confirmed by texts completely independent of Raimondo da Capua and the disciples of the Saint."²⁰⁷

In his work that was published in 1921, Fawtier was skeptical of the integrity of some of Catherine's writings, but in *Les oeuvres de Sainte Catherine de Sienne*, published in 1930, he sets Catherine's writings against those of her biographers, while still positing that Catherine's writings had been tampered with:

From the letters, from *Il Dialogo*, from the prayers, one will be able to obtain an image of Catherine different from that which the hagiographers presented us, and the difference would be, without doubt, more considerable if the works had escaped from the action of the artisans of the canonization of the Sienese tertiary. To achieve their objective, they have done the work in such a way as to render the documents suspect, even to the most credible, of any authenticity or incontestable historical value. They have allowed the originals to be lost, mutilated the texts, and in some cases, fortunately rather rare, introduced doubtful elements. They wished to do good too much. The simple truth would have better served the ends they pursued.²⁰⁸

Fawtier does not accept any historical assertions unless they are verified by another contemporary source. Thus, he initially considered the account of the beheading of Niccolò di Toldo in Letter 272 to be an invention of Caffarini although later he proposed it to be a vision of Catherine's. He does not find any documents that prove that Catherine functioned as an unofficial ambassador for Florence at the court of Avignon or that Catherine was in any way responsible for Gregory

²⁰⁶ "Le Procès de Venise n'est qu'une manifestation organisée pour amener la canonisation, une parodie de procès." *Ibid.*, 215.

²⁰⁷ "[E]n un mot, il semble qu'il y ait vraiment bien peu à tirer de l'hagiographie catherinienne, et, dans tous les cas, celle-ci est tellement tendancieuse qu'on ne saurait en accepter la moindre assertion, à moins qu'elle ne soit confirmée par des textes complètement indépendants de Raymond da Capoue et des disciples de la sainte." *Ibid.*, 215-216.

²⁰⁸ "Des lettres, du *Dialogo*, des oraisons, on pourra dégager une image de Catherine différente de celle que nous ont présentée ses hagiographes, et la différence serait sans doute plus considérable si ces œuvres avaient échappé à l'action des artisans de la canonisation de la tertiare siennoise. Pour atteindre leur but, ceux-ci ont opéré de manière à rendre suspect aux plus crédules des documents d'une authenticité et d'une valeur historique incontestables. Ils ont laissé disparaître les originaux, mutilé les textes et, dans quelques cas heureusement assez rares, introduit des éléments douteux. Ils ont voulu trop bien faire. La vérité toute simple eût mieux servi les fins qu'ils poursuivaient." Robert Fawtier, *Sainte Catherine de Sienne. Essai de critique des sources. II. Les œuvres de Sainte Catherine de Sienne* (Paris: De Boccard, 1930), 361.

XI's return to Rome. He dismisses her second journey to Florence in which she sought reconciliation for that city with Gregory as a fabrication of her disciples. Fawtier's *La double experience de Catherine Benincasa*, composed with Louis Canet in 1948, softens somewhat his criticism of the hagiographic sources, but emphasizes his fundamental thesis that there is a distinction between Catherine's interior experience and her exterior historical activities.

Fawtier's writings provoked a rash of responses. For example, Fawtier challenges the date Raimondo had given for Catherine's birth, March 25, 1347. This date, Fawtier holds, conveniently allows Catherine's life to parallel the life of Christ. She is born on the feast of His Incarnation, dying thirty-three years later. Fawtier asserts that the extant list of the *Mantellate* at San Domenico, dated 1352, includes Catherine, indicating that Catherine necessarily was born earlier than Raimondo claimed.

The Dominican historian, Mandonnet, responds by demonstrating that Catherine's age as given in Raimondo's *Legenda*, is confirmed by the anonymous author of *I Miracoli*,²⁰⁹ and by a panegyric of William Flete.²¹⁰ Mandonnet also shows that the list to which Fawtier refers was a vesting register of the *Mantellate* that began in 1352 and was added to periodically.²¹¹ Innocenzo Taurisano has noted, in fact, that the writing on the list indicates sixteen different hands.²¹² E. Jordan, by comparing the list of the *Mantellate* with the necrology of San Domenico, demonstrates that some of those listed, such as Catherine's mother, Lapa, could only have become members of the *Mantellate*, after they were widowed, which was later than 1352.²¹³

As can be seen from this example, Fawtier's challenge caused scholars such as Mandonnet, Jordan, and Taurisano to reexamine the original sources, thus giving Catherinian studies a new impetus. In 1926, a Chair of Catherinian Studies was established at the University of Siena. Likewise, the *Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo* began its sponsorship of the development of the critical text of Catherine's letters. In 1936, the University of Siena began to publish the comprehensive edition of the Catherinian sources, known as the *Fontes vitae s. Catharinae Senensis historici*.

²⁰⁹ "La quale è d'etade di venzette anni." Anonimo Fiorentino, *I Miracoli*, 1. The anonymous author indicates that he is writing in 1374. If Catherine was 27 at the time, she would have been 33 at the time of her death.

²¹⁰ William Flete, O.S.A., "Sermon on Catherine of Siena," in Benedict Hackett, O.S.A., *William Flete, O.S.A., and Catherine of Siena*, 185.

²¹¹ Pierre Mandonnet, O.P., "Sainte Catherine de Sienne et la critique historique," *L'Année Dominicaine* (January-February 1923): 6-17, 43-52.

²¹² Innocenzo Taurisano, O.P., "La critica delle fonti agiografiche catheriniane," *Studi Catheriniani* III/1-2 (1926): 24.

²¹³ E. Jordan, "La date de naissance de Sainte Catherine de Sienne," *Analecta Bollandiana* 40 (1922): 365-411.

Noële Denis-Boulet observes the effect of Fawtier's original book: "This first volume marks a new era of Catherinian studies...if only for the efforts of the reaction that he provoked."²¹⁴ Fawtier, in his own right, contributed to the advancement of Catherinian studies through his extensive research. Fawtier's intention was to liberate the actual Catherine, even if, at times, his positions were overstated.

Fawtier's assertions have caused scholars to be more observant in examining the original texts. Fawtier is correct that there is a difference between Catherine as she appears in her own writings and as she appears in the writings of her biographers. The saint of the hagiographers, already encased in stained glass, is awe-inspiring in her strength. However, when one reads her letters, one discovers a very human woman whose intense love inserts her in others' lives, and whose confidence in truth makes her speak that truth, courageously but lovingly, even as she feels the hurts and disappointments that come from her actions. The difference between Catherine as she knew herself and as her disciples perceived her is illustrated in an occasion when Catherine expresses exasperation at Raimondo's minimizing the seriousness of her faults: "My Lord God, what kind of a spiritual father do I now have, who excuses my sins?"²¹⁵

In addition to desiring to communicate her teachings, Catherine's disciples wanted to promote her canonization and thus they selected information that would forward that cause, a selectivity that is natural in promoting any particular position. Catherine's mystical experiences are recorded in hagiographic works in which the events are interpreted with the intention of edifying the reader and encouraging admiration for the holy person. Raimondo and Caffarini not only wanted to edify their readers but also to establish her sanctity. As Denis-Boulet has pointed out, Raimondo wrote with the awareness that his work would serve as the basis of Catherine's canonization process.²¹⁶ Caffarini was especially avid in promoting interest in Catherine.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ "[C]e premier volume...marque une nouvelle ère des études catheriniennes...quand ce ne serait que pour les efforts de réaction qu'il a provoqués." Noële Denis-Boulet, "Sainte Catherine de Sienne: Le problème critique," *Nova et vetera* (1936): 376.

²¹⁵ "Ha! domine Deus meus, qualem Patrem spiritualem ego nunc habeo, qui excusat peccata mea?" Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, I, xliii, 873.

²¹⁶ "Il savait, d'ailleurs, que, suivant l'usage fâcheux admis dans des cas semblables, l'œuvre achevée serait définitive et servirait de base au procès de canonisation." Noële Denis-Boulet, "Sainte Catherine de Sienne: Le problème critique," *Nova et vetera* (1936): 369.

²¹⁷ In fact, Caffarini prodded Raimondo to complete his *legenda*. Caffarini became even more intent in his efforts to advance Catherine's canonization after the *Processus* began. The second half of Caffarini's *Libellus de Supplemento*, which was composed after the *Processus* had begun, shows an even stronger interest in Catherine's canonization than the first half.

This is not to say that Raimondo or Caffarini fabricated their accounts but it does mean that they selected, presented, and interpreted their material with a purpose in mind. Denis-Boulet observes with regard to Raimondo's work that it was "a panegyric, the argument of a lawyer."²¹⁸ Conleth Kearns, O.P., has remarked regarding Raimondo's choice of literary medium: "In his time *legenda* was the long-established and universally accepted literary form for hagiography."²¹⁹ The same can be said for Caffarini whose *Libellus de Supplemento* is presented as supplementing Raimondo's *Legenda*, and whose *Legenda minor* was intended to abbreviate the *Legenda maior*. One of the traditional elements which would have been expected in a *legenda* was a number and variety of miraculous events.

Raimondo, unlike authors of similar works, emphasizes the revelatory significance of the miracles, visions, and providential happenings as signs that God is with Catherine and works through her.²²⁰ Even though Raimondo provides ample details concerning Catherine's miracles and apparitions, he considers the primary indications of her sanctity to be her virtues. In the concluding paragraph of his *Vita*, Raimondo argues for Catherine's canonization not on the basis of her miracles or visions, but on the basis of her patience in difficulties which he compares to the sufferings of the martyrs.²²¹

One factor that argues for the basic truthfulness of her disciples is that, as much as they sought her canonization, they did not tone down or delete Catherine's candid critiques of the Church from her book or even the personal reproaches sent to the popes, cardinals and bishops from her letters. The fact that the very direct and vigorous criticisms of the condition of the Church and its ministers, including the popes and cardinals, were not deleted from her writings argues that this desire to win Church approval was secondary to the desire to preserve Catherine's teachings.

In recent years, the study of Catherine of Siena has been spurred on by a number of factors such as the conferral of the title "Doctor of the Church" in 1970 and the six hundredth anniversary of her death in 1980. Catherinian studies have been affected by the desire among scholars in general to have more critical texts. The increasing recognition among the members of the Dominican family of their tradition, as well as the growing appreciation of Dominican women, have also stimulated much interest in Catherine.

²¹⁸ "Il écrivait donc un panégyrique, c'est-à-dire une plaidoirie." Denis-Boulet, "Sainte Catherine de Siéne: Le problème critique," 370.

²¹⁹ Conleth Kearns, O.P., Introduction to Raymond of Capua, *The Life of Catherine of Siena*, trans. Conleth Kearns, O.P. (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier Inc., 1980), lvi.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, lvii.

²²¹ Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, III, cdxxx, 967.

Recent Catherinian Issues

At the present time in the Church, people with very different outlooks find in Catherine a patron and model. Suzanne Noffke warns against the danger of stretching our interpretations to enlist Catherine's support: "What is legitimate and even helpful, however, is to attempt to read out of her life and writings the principles that formed her thought, the principles out of which she responded to her own questions and out of which she would respond to today's questions if she were living today and had not changed her mind-set."²²²

Among the interesting discussions that have focused on Catherine in recent years is that of the psychological dynamics at work in her fasting. In Letter 92, Catherine explains to a person who criticized her fasting that she had prayed to eat as other people do and had tried once or twice a day to do so. This passage is certainly an important locus for the discussion of her fasting, especially given Catherine's conclusion that the cause of her difficulty was her secret gluttony.²²³

In a letter to Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi in February 1376, Catherine suggests that instead of the usual prayers required for an indulgence they had received, that she might be obliged to fast: "Now I would be content, if it seems to you, to ask him that he might impose on me that I might fast every Friday on bread and water."²²⁴ It seems that eventually even bread was more than she could eat because Raimondo tells us that in her last years her nourishment came from chewing bitter greens and spitting them out. Raimondo, intending to edify his readers, unwittingly provides material for psychological speculation when he devotes a whole chapter to detailing Catherine's eating habits.

Catherine receives her own chapter in Rudolf Bell's *Holy Anorexia*,²²⁵ in which Bell interprets Catherine's behavior according to contemporary studies of anorexia

²²² Suzanne Noffke, O.P., "Catherine of Siena and Ecclesial Obedience," *Spirituality Today* 41 (Spring 1989): 4.

²²³ Renée Neu Watkins relates Catherine's fasting with the restriction of women's spiritual leadership in the fourteenth century society to visionaries and mystics. Watkins points out what she describes as a double bind in which Catherine's confessors discouraged her fasting and yet were fascinated by the same fasting, which confirmed her holiness for them. Watkins asserts that Catherine was not allowed to speak about this double bind. See Renée Neu Watkins, "Two Women Visionaries and Death: Catherine of Siena and Julian of Norwich," *Numen* 30 (December 1983): 187-188. While there is evidence that Catherine's confessors encouraged her to eat and that they also saw her extreme fasting as a sign of her holiness, there is no evidence that she was not allowed to discuss her situation.

²²⁴ "Or mi contenterei, se ti pare, di dimandargli che m'imponesse ch'io digiunasse ogni venerdì in pane ed acqua" (Letter 228, III, 307). Noffke indicates a date between February 25 to 28, 1376 for this letter.

²²⁵ Rudolph M. Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1985): 22-53.

and bulimia.²²⁶ Caroline Bynum, in her work *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, advises that psychological factors need to be understood according to the symbolic significance of food and corporeality at the time and that, while modern definitions can be helpful in identifying the behavior, they can also obscure the true meaning of the behavior. She cautions: "Because they do not take seriously the symbols used in women's experience or the ideologies formulated about it, they have cut the phenomenon of refusal to eat from its context of food-related behavior. Moreover, they have neglected female attitudes towards suffering and generativity."²²⁷ Among the other factors that Bynum suggests need to be considered is "the late medieval notion of *imitatio Christi* as fusion with the suffering physicality of Christ."²²⁸ It may be true that Catherine shortened her life by not drinking water in the month of January 1380, but it is also true that Catherine believed that her suffering could effect a resolution to the disastrous split in the Church.

Catherine's reactions to fasting and penances by other people should be noted. *Il Dialogo* emphasizes the need for discernment and the danger of self deception in penances. Ironically, despite her personal practices, fasting does not seem to be a preoccupation in her writings. In addition to Letter 92 and Letter 228 in which she writes of her personal fasting, only sixteen of the three hundred and eighty-two letters mention fasting. Nine of these instances contain a one-sentence reference to fasting in which she includes fasting together with prayer and vigils as the standard ways of taming the flesh. While she encourages Cardinal Corsini (Letter 177) and Cardinal Pietro Di Luna, the future anti-pope (Letter 293), to take up fasting, she tells Agnesa Pipino not to fast in two letters. Her words to Suor Daniella da Orvieto are certainly well chosen: "If the body is weak and becomes ill, the rule of discernment does not wish that you do so. And you ought not only to stop fasting, but to eat meat, and if one time a day is not enough for you, eat it four times."²²⁹

The possibility that strong psychological factors were at play in Catherine's behavior should not startle those who realize that the interplay between needs, drives, and grace can often be dramatic, possibly in everyone, but especially in the saints.

²²⁶ It is this writer's impression that Bell oversimplifies Catherine's behavior and interprets her reactions without an appreciation of the nuances of her complex character. The complexity of Catherine's character becomes evident through a thorough reading of the entire corpus of her letters. Bell appears to be familiar with only selective parts of Catherine's writings.

²²⁷ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 207.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ "Ma se il corpo è debile, venuto ad infermità, non vuole la regola della discrezione, che faccia così. Anco, debbe non solamente lassare il digiuno, ma mangi della carne: e se non gli basta una volta il dì, pigline quattro" (Letter 213, III, 232-233). Noffke places this letter between October 10 and 25, 1378.

Conclusion

Great advances have been made in Catherinian studies during the twentieth century. Critical texts are now available for *Il Dialogo*, *Le Orazioni*, and for a number of Catherine's letters. The major codices of the letters have been identified, although the nagging difficulties in establishing an accurate chronology have delayed the definitive publication of the complete letters.

Challenges to the traditional assumptions about Catherine have spurred a more scientific examination of her writings, as well as a desire to analyze the earliest biographical materials, thus prompting the critical publication of those works. Efforts to decipher the influences on Catherine have yielded a better appreciation of the relationship between Catherine and the tradition she inherited, as well as a greater understanding of the way in which Catherine incorporated ideas from her sources into her own thought. Although most of the literature concerning Catherine has come from Italy, excellent translations, such as those of Suzanne Noffke, have now made her writings accessible to non-Italians, encouraging scholarly research in other languages as well.²³⁰

The designation of Catherine as a Doctor of the Church has given her writings the authority that belongs to the preeminent teachers of the Church. As a new century begins, a renewed appreciation for spirituality and a growing recognition of the position of women in society and in the Church have made the writings of this woman mystic especially attractive. It appears that the time has come to acknowledge Catherine as a valuable source for theological understanding.

²³⁰ Some recent English studies have been: Mary Jeremiah Gillett, O.P., *The Secret of the Heart* (Fort Royal, VA: Christendom Press, 1995); Catherine M. Meade, C.S.J., *My Nature Is Fire: Saint Catherine of Siena* (New York: Alba House, 1991); Suzanne Noffke, O.P., *Catherine of Siena: Vision through a Distant Eye* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996); Mary O'Driscoll, O.P., *Catherine of Siena: Passion for the Truth, Compassion for Humanity* (New York: New City Press, 1993).

CHAPTER 2

SALVATION IN THE WRITINGS OF CATHERINE OF SIENA

Catherine of Siena might seem to be an unlikely source for the serious study of soteriology. It would appear that the contributions of this Doctor of the Church, who is renowned for her mysticism and her spirited activity on behalf of the Church, would lie in spiritual theology. Her writings on salvation might seem to be more inspirational and devotional than theological. And yet, Catherine's mysticism is steeped in theological understanding of the mystery of redemption. Throughout her writings, Catherine ponders the redemption as it is presented in Scripture and in the tradition that developed as the Church reflected on Scripture. She continually applies the truths of this mystery to her own experience and the experience of those to whom she writes.

In her letters, her prayers, and in her book, *Il Dialogo*, Catherine continually returns to the theme of salvation. In fact, this theme pervades all of her other teachings. Various studies have probed aspects of salvation in her writings, such as the motives for the Incarnation,¹ the mystery of Christ,² Christ as Redeemer,³ the Passion,⁴ the cross,⁵ the heart of Jesus,⁶ and particularly the mystery of the blood.⁷

¹ Antonio D'Achille, "Il motivo dell'Incarnazione nell'Aquinate e in S. Caterina," *Memorie Domenicane (Il Rosario)* 40 (1923): 5-9. See also Lodovico Bernini, "Il mistero dell'Incarnazione nel pensiero di S. Caterina," *Rassegna Cateriniana* 8 (1929): 281-290.

² Giuliana Cavallini, "Il mistero di Cristo nella dottrina cateriniana," *Nuovi Studi Cateriniani* 1 (1984): 7-20.

³ Angelo Puccetti, O.P., "La Figura del Redentore in S. Caterina," *Memorie Domenicane* 64 (1947): 228-239.

⁴ Giuliana Cavallini, "L'orazione di S. Caterina da Siena sulla Passione di Cristo," *Fonti vive. Rivista della Passione* 17/3 (1971): 161-183.

⁵ Tito Sante Centi, O.P., "Il mistero della croce nella vita e nel pensiero di santa Caterina da Siena," *Rassegna di ascetica e mistica* 26 (1975): 330-337.

⁶ Sr. Mary Jeremiah Gillett, O.P., *The Secret of the Heart* (Fort Royal, VA: Christendom Press, 1995). See also Angelo Walz, O.P., "Ripensando su una devozione Cateriniana ossia il cuore di Gesù visto e venerato dalla Senese," *Atti del Symposium Catharinianum nel V Centenario della canonizzazione di Santa Caterina da Siena, 24-28 aprile 1962* (Siena, 1962): 135-155.

⁷ Carlo Riccardi, C.M., *Il Sangue di Cristo negli scritti di S. Caterina da Siena* (Roma: Edizioni Unione Preziosissimo Sangue, 1984). See also Virgilio Noe, "La Redenzione nel sangue negli scritti di S. Caterina," *Nuovi Studi Cateriniani* 1 (1984): 21-33; Raimondo Spiazzi, O.P., "Il Sacerdote 'ministerio del sangue' secondo S. Caterina da Siena," *Il sangue prezioso della nostra redenzione* 48/2

This chapter will attempt to develop a comprehensive exposition of Catherine's teachings on salvation, encompassing each of these aspects.

For Catherine, salvation is the manifestation of God's goodness to humanity in general and to every individual in particular, as God seeks to draw each person to eternal life. Catherine continually relates the salvific acts of Jesus to the individual experience of salvation. As the New Testament writers speak of "those who are being saved" (1 Cor. 1:18; 15:2; 2 Cor. 2:15) and of those who "stand firm to the end [and] will be saved" (Mk. 13:13), so, Catherine depicts salvation both in its process and in its completion.

In each of her writings, she recalls God's salvific acts to evoke a loving response to God from her readers. Echoing Thomas's teachings on the influence of the understanding upon the will, Catherine communicates with the intention of stirring love: "This faith is a light which is in the eye of the understanding that makes us see and know the truth. And the thing that is known to be good is loved. Not knowing it, it cannot be loved, and not loving it, it is not able to be known."⁸ For her, reflection on the truths of the faith leads not only to love but to union and transformation in God. Thus, she prays: "Love, gentle love, open for us, open for us the memory to receive and to retain and understand the great goodness of God. Because through understanding, we love. Loving, we find ourselves united and transformed in the love of the mother of charity, having passed and still passing by the gate of Christ crucified."⁹

(1962): 75-78; Francesco Valli, "Il Sangue di Cristo nell'opera di S. Caterina da Siena," in *Saggi sulla letteratura religiosa del Trecento* (Urbino: Argalia, 1943), 107-135.

⁸ "La quale fede è uno lume che sta nell'occhio dell'intelletto; che ci fa vedere e cognoscere la verità. La cosa che si cognosce buona, si ama; non cognoscendola, non si può amare: e non amandola, non si può cognoscere" (Letter 318, V, 50). Noffke gives between January 15 and 31, 1379, as a possible date for this letter to Sano di Maco and Catherine's other disciples in Siena, during the time when Catherine was in Rome. Catherine often relied on the practical advice of Sano di Maco di Mazzacorno, a wool worker in Siena, who was the leader of the *Compagnia della Vergine Maria* at *La Scala* Hospital in Siena. St. Thomas points out that the first apprehension of the object is by the intellect or understanding, which then moves the will: "Ad tertium dicendum quod finem primo apprehendit intellectus quam voluntas: tamen motus ad finem incipit in voluntate" (I-II, 3,4 ad 3). Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 16, trans. Thomas Gilbey, O.P. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969), 72.

⁹ "Amore, amore dolce, uopreci, uopreci la memoria a ricevere e a ritenere tanta bontà di Dio e intendare; chè intendendo amiamo: amando, noi ci troviamo uniti e trasformati nella dilectione della madre della carità, passati e passando per la porta di Cristo crocifisso...." (Letter 41, I, 169-170). Catherine sent this letter to her first confessor, Frate Tommaso Dalla Fonte. Noffke dates this letter as possibly in 1368 but definitely before May of 1374. For a similar reference on the relationship between loving and knowing, see *Il Dialogo*, LXXV.

In her writings, Catherine develops a theology of salvation which, although non-systematic, is nonetheless comprehensive: in frequently reiterating the very purpose of creation; in regularly recalling the redemptive actions of Jesus on the cross; in continually connecting the redemption to the process of the individual's experience of salvation with reference to the Church and the sacraments; and in constantly calling the believer to prayer, mission, and service of neighbor.

At times, Catherine draws upon the traditional understandings of salvation of the Fathers, as well as Anselm and Thomas, which she gleaned from homilies or from conversations with her priest friends. At other times, she modifies these traditions to emphasize and illustrate what she perceives to be most essential in these mysteries, God's goodness and love. Since her choices are made to evoke a response, she refashions the vocabulary, ideas, and images that she appropriates from preachers and authors, in such a way as to impress upon her readers that God's actions are meant to fulfill His purpose, to draw them to eternal life. The purpose of Catherine's writings on salvation is salvation itself, her own salvation and the salvation of her readers.

God's Purpose in Creation, Its Frustration through Sin, and God's Response in the Incarnation

Catherine sees the redemption in the context of God's purpose in creation. For her, sin is the frustration of God's original plan for humanity. Jesus, through the redemption which He accomplished, restores humanity to God's original design. This work of salvation begins with the Incarnation in which the Son of God enters the human condition.

God's Purpose in the Creation of Humanity

Catherine frequently makes reference to the purpose for which God created human beings. In *Il Dialogo*, the Father states: "This truth is that I have created him in My image and likeness that he might have eternal life and he might share in Me and might taste My supreme and eternal kindness and goodness."¹⁰ God has created humanity to share in His life eternally. God's providence seeks to conform the individual to this purpose. This process is sanctification: "His will is our sanctification. This is the truth and for this end God created us in order that we might be sancti-

¹⁰ "Questa verità è che Io l'avevo creato a la imagine e similitudine mia perché egli avesse vita eterna, e partecipasse me e gustasse la somma ed eterna dolcezza e bontà mia" (*Il Dialogo*, XXI, 59).

fied in Him to the praise and glory of His name and in order that we might enjoy and might taste His eternal vision."¹¹

The relationship between God and creatures is founded on the fact that existence is proper to God alone. This theological principle is at the heart of Catherine's spiritual doctrine. She frequently repeats this principle, as when, for instance, she depicts the Father declaring in *Il Dialogo*: "Everything is made and created by My goodness, because I am the one who is, and without Me nothing is made, except only sin which is not."¹² It would be difficult to overestimate how important this truth is for Catherine. In his biography of Catherine, Raimondo, her confessor and disciple, affirms that the primary principle in her understanding is the one given to her by Jesus early in her spiritual life: "You are that one who is not: I am that one who is."¹³

Since there is no necessary reason why any individual should exist or have any particular thing as part of his or her life, then life and everything that follows from life are gifts. Reflecting on this truth, Catherine asserts: "Let us see that He is that one who is infinite Good, and we are those who are not through ourselves. For our being and every gift which is given beyond our being is from Him."¹⁴ This perception of the gift-like character of all existence is the basis for the person's relationship to God. Thus, she exclaims: "You alone are who is, and being and every gift beyond being I have from You, which You gave me and give me for love and not as owed."¹⁵

Catherine recognizes that most people are oblivious to their dependence on God for everything. She attests that this awareness is obtained through self-knowledge: "One conceives this charity and love within one's soul, with the light with which one would know oneself to be loved by God. So you see that from love, with light,

¹¹ "La volontà sua è la nostra santificazione: questa è la verità; e per questo fine ci creò Dio, cioè perchè fussimo santificati in lui a loda e gloria del nome suo, e acciò che noi godessimo e gustassimo la eterna sua visione" (Letter 253, IV, 73). Suzanne Noffke estimates that this letter was written in mid-September 1377. This letter was sent to the despotic ruler of Foligno, Trincio de' Trinci, and his brother, Corrado. Although Trincio and Corrado were opponents of the papal forces, they were the brothers of Catherine's friend, Biancina Salimbeni.

¹² "Perché ogni cosa è fatta e creata da la mia bontà, però ch'io so' Colui che so', e senza me veruna cosa è fatta, se non solo il peccato che non è" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXIV, 437).

¹³ "Tu enim es ella, quae non es: Ego autem sum ille, qui sum." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, I, xcii, 885.

¹⁴ "Vediamo che elli è colui che è Bene infinito, e noi siamo coloro che non siamo per noi medesimi. Però che l'essere nostro e ogni gratia che è posta sopra l'essere aviamo da lui" (Letter 13, I, 46). Catherine wrote this letter to the prosperous merchant, Marco Bindi. Noffke surmises that this letter was written in December 1378.

¹⁵ "Però che tu se' solo colui che se', e l'essere e ogni grazia che ài posta sopra l'essere ò da te, che me 'l desti e dai per amore, e non per debito" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXIV, 423).

love is acquired. But where will we find it? In the holy knowledge of ourselves, seeing ourselves loved before we were, because the love which God had for us constrained Him to create us in His image and likeness."¹⁶

In self-knowledge, one begins to appreciate not only one's dependency on God but one also begins to understand that God is good and generous: "Knowing himself not to be, seeing himself not to be through himself, he attributes and knows he has his being from God, and every grace which is founded upon this being, that is, the graces and spiritual and temporal gifts which God gives us. For if we were not, we would not be able to receive any grace. So he has everything and he finds he has it through the boundless goodness and charity of God."¹⁷

The realization that human beings are created for their own good not for God's advantage causes one to grow in an appreciation of the gratuity of God's love. Catherine writes: "He did not do this out of obligation nor because He was asked, nor for any benefit that could be drawn by Him, only the abyss and the force of love and His ineffable charity moved Him."¹⁸ God's disposition towards creatures is not one of distant benevolence but one of ardent love. In fact, Catherine vividly pictures God as falling in love with the very idea of the person to be created: "You, eternal God, saw and knew me in Yourself, and since You saw me in Your light, then, fallen in love with Your creature, You drew her from Yourself and created her in Your image and likeness."¹⁹

¹⁶ "La quale carità ed amore concepe dentro nell'anima sua, col lume col quale egli cognobbe sè essere amato da Dio. Sicchè vedete, che dall'amore, col lume, s'acquista l'amore. Ma dove 'l troveremo? Nel cognoscimento santo di noi, vedendoci amati prima che noi fussimo: perocchè l'amore, che Dio ebbe a noi, il costrinse a crearci a la immagine e similitudine sua" (Letter 304, IV, 275). Catherine wrote this letter to Monna Lodovica di Granello. Noffke dates this letter on August 26, 1378. For another reference to finding the goodness of God within oneself, see Letter 116.

¹⁷ "Cognoscendo sè medesimo non essere: vedendo sè non essere per sè medesimo, retribuiscce e cognosce da Dio avere l'essere suo, e ogni gratia che è fondata sopra questo essere, cioè le gratie e i doni spirituali e temporali che Dio ci dà: chè, se noi non fussimo, non potremo ricevere neuna gratia. Sicchè ogni cosa à, e truova d'avere per la inestimabile bontà e carità di Dio" (Letter 29, I, 103). Catherine wrote this letter to Regina della Scala, the wife of Bernabò Visconti. Noffke places this letter between Advent, 1375, and early 1376. For a similar reference to God's love for the individual before his or her creation, see Letter 305.

¹⁸ "Questo fece non per debito, nè perchè ne fusse pregato, nè per utilità che traesse da lui: solo l'abisso e la forza dell'amore e la ineffabile carità sua el mosse" (Letter 133, II, 251). This letter was written to Giovanna, the wily Queen of Naples, between July 1 and 7, 1375, urging Giovanna to reform her life and to help recover the holy places through a crusade. For other references to the human dependence on God for existence, see *Il Dialogo*, CXL.

¹⁹ "Tu, Dio eterno, vedesti e cognoscesti me in te, e perchè tu mi vedesti nel lume tuo, però, innamorato della tua creatura, la traesti di te e creastila a la imagine e similitudine tua" (*Oratio* IV, 38). Cavallini proposes that this prayer was made in Rome on February 18, 1379. See Cavallini, *Le*

Underlining Catherine's conception of the human person is a very positive anthropology. The human being is not only basically good but is even beautiful to God. She comments: "Moved by the fire of His Divine Charity, then, through the love that He had for His creature, looking upon her within Himself, He fell in love with her beauty and with the creation of His hands."²⁰ Catherine's expressions become especially exuberant as she strives to describe this extravagant love: "God, gazing within Himself, fell in love with the beauty of His creature, and as one drunk with love, He created us in His image and likeness."²¹ Overwhelmed by the extravagance of this love, she exclaims: "I confess and I do not deny that You loved me before I was and that You love me ineffably much, as if crazy for Your creature."²²

Catherine presents human nature, as it is created, in a very favorable manner. The dignity and beauty of the human being reflects God's own image and likeness. Catherine locates the image and likeness especially in the traditional three powers of the soul:

So strong was the love which God had for the creature, that He was moved to draw us out from Himself, and to give us His own image and likeness, only that we might enjoy and taste Him, and share His eternal beauty. He did not make us animals without an intellect or memory, but He gave us the memory to retain His benefits, and the understanding to understand His supreme and eternal will which does not seek or wish other than our sanctification, and the will to love it.²³

These powers of the soul image God as a Trinity: "You say, eternal Father, that the person who considers himself finds You in himself because he is created in

Orazioni, 36. For other references to God's particular love for individuals as the cause of their existence, see *Oratio* V and Letter 32.

²⁰ "Mosso dunque dal fuoco della sua Divina Carità, per l'amore che egli ebbe alla sua creatura, guardandola dentro di sè, innamorossi della bellezza sua e della fattura delle mani sue" (Letter 223, III, 283).

²¹ "Perocchè, ragguardando Dio in sè medesimo, s'innamorò della bellezza della sua creatura; e come ebbro d'amore, ci creò alla imagine e similitudine sua" (Letter 308, IV, 291). This letter was written to Suor Daniella da Orvieto. Noffke places this letter between December 20, 1378, and January 31, 1379.

²² "Io confesso, e non lo niego, che tu m'amasti prima che io fosse e che tu m'ami ineffabilmente, come pazzo della tua creatura" (*Il Dialogo*, CLXVII, 584). For other references to the dignity of created beings, see *Il Dialogo* LI and Letter 21.

²³ "Chè si forte fu l'amore che Dio ebbe alla creatura, che 'l mosse a trare noi di sè, e donarci a noi medesimi la immagine e similitudine sua, solo perchè noi godessimo e gustassimo lui, e partecipassimo l'eterna sua bellezza. Non ci fece animali senza intelletto e memoria; ma egli ci de' la memoria a ritenere e' beneficii suoi, e lo 'ntendimento ad intendare la somma e eterna sua volontà, la quale non cerca nè vuole altro che la nostra santificatione, e la volontà ad amarla" (Letter 108, II, 146). This letter is addressed to Monna Giovanna di Capo and Francesca, two members of the *Mantellate*. Noffke dates this letter between December 20 and 31, 1377. For a similar reference see also *Oratio* XIII.

Your image. He has memory to retain You and Your blessings, sharing Your power in this way. He has the understanding to know You and Your will, sharing of the wisdom of Your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and He has the will to love You, sharing the mercy of the Holy Spirit."²⁴ This reflection of the Trinity in the powers of the soul is rooted in the writings of St. Augustine, which Catherine may have become aware of through the preaching she heard and through conversations with her priest friends.²⁵

In discussing theological concepts, Catherine easily moves from the technical theological expressions to her own more experiential and poetic images. Thus, she reflects on her own nature as it images God: "In your nature, eternal Deity, I will know my nature. And what is my nature, inestimable love? It is fire because You are nothing other than a fire of love, and You have given humanity this nature because through a fire of love You created us."²⁶ Because human nature is created with so much love, it necessarily loves. In *Il Dialogo*, the Father states: "The soul is not able to live without love, but always wants to love something because she is made of love since I created her through love."²⁷ This inclination to love reflects

²⁴ "Tu dici, Padre eterno, che l'uomo che riguarda sé truova te in sé però che egli è creato alla imagine tua: ha la memoria a ritenere te e i benefici tuoi, partecipando in questo della potencia tua; ha lo 'ntelletto a cognoscere te e la volontà tua, partecipando della sapiencia dell'unigenito tuo Figliuolo signore nostro Iesu Cristo, e ha la volontà ad amare te, partecipando la clemencia dello Spirito santo" (*Oratio* XVII, 196). This prayer was made when Catherine was in Rome. For another reference on this theme of the relationship of the powers of the soul and the Trinity, see *Il Dialogo* CX, *Oratio* I, and Letter 158.

²⁵ As early as 410-412, St. Augustine made the comparison between the actions of the Trinity and these human powers: "So these three, memory, understanding and will; notice I say, that these three are uttered separately, but operate inseparably." St. Augustine, "Sermon 52" in *The Works of Saint Augustine, Sermons III*, ed. John E. Rotelle, O.S.A., trans. Edmund Hill, O.P. (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991), 60. Augustine offers this image as a model of the Trinity, but one which must be used cautiously. When pushed to explain, he refuses to be too explicit as to which power is a likeness to which member of the Trinity: "I can't tell you, I can't explain...I don't say memory is the Father, understanding is the Son, will is the Spirit. I don't say it, however it may be understood. I don't dare to" (*Ibid.*, 61-62). In his work, *On The Trinity*, Augustine uses this same image as a model of the Trinity: "Since we found the mind itself to be such in its own memory, and understanding and will, that since it was understood always to know and always to will itself, it was understood also at the same time always to remember itself." St. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, ed. Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, vol. III (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980), X, 12, 143.

²⁶ "Nella natura tua, Deità eterna, conoscerò la natura mia. E quale è la natura mia, amore inestimabile? È il fuoco, però che tu non se'altro che fuoco d'amore, e di questa natura hai data a l'uomo però che per fuoco d'amore l'hai creato" (*Oratio* XXII, 258). This prayer was given on February 16, 1379, while Catherine was in Rome.

²⁷ "L'anima non può vivere senza amore, ma sempre vuole amare alcuna cosa, perchè ella è fatta d'amore, chè per amore la creai" (*Il Dialogo*, LI, 135). For a similar reference to the soul's need for love, see Letter 363.

not only the individual's creation by God but also the conception of the individual by the parents:

Realize...that the first garment which we had was love, because we were created in the image and likeness of God only through love. And so a person is not able to be without love for he is made only of this love because whatever he has, in soul and in body, he has through love since his father and his mother had given being to their child, that is, of the substance of his flesh, by the grace of God, only through love.²⁸

Realizing that human beings have been created in the image of God and that their nature and powers, which find expression in love, reflect the Trinity, Catherine is overwhelmed by the goodness of God. She considers that the human being has every reason to love God, as she prays: "The reasonable thing is that knowing You, infinite goodness, I should love You.... Certainly then we ought to be ashamed to see ourselves to be so loved by You and not to love You."²⁹ For Catherine, loving God is the natural response to the love which is initiated by God: "Love, love, see that you were loved, before you loved."³⁰

It is love itself which repays the debt which follows God's generosity: "You know that we are all debtors to God because what we have, we have only through grace and through inestimable love.... This is a debt that we have drawn from God, and this debt He wishes should be rendered to Him, that is love for love."³¹ This obligation to love God is better fulfilled as one grows in the knowledge of God's

²⁸ "Pensate...che 'l primo vestimento che noi avessimo fu l'amore: però che fummo creati all'immagine e similitudine di Dio solo per amore, e però l'uomo non può stare senza amore, chè non è fatto d'altro che d'esso amore, chè ciò ch'egli à, secondo l'anima e secondo il corpo, à per amore; perchè à il padre e la madre dato l'essere al figliuolo, cioè della sustantia della carne sua, mediante la gratia di Dio, solo per amore" (Letter IX, VI, 23). Catherine wrote this letter to Bartolomeo della Pace Smeducci da Sanseverino, the Lord of San Severino in the Marches, who was the captain general of the armies of the Italian communes against the foreign mercenaries who were ravaging the cities. This letter is the first of the letters found by Gardner. See Gardner I, 408 as well as DT LII, 202. Noffke locates this letter between November and December 1375.

²⁹ "Ragionevole cosa è che cognoscendo te, bontà infinita, te ami.... Ben si debba dunque vergognare l'uomo venderosi tanto amare da te e non amarti" (*Oratio* I, 6,8). Catherine composed this prayer on the Vigil of the Assumption, 1376. For a similar reference to the obligation to respond to God's love, see Letter 171.

³⁰ "Amate, amate; guardate che prima fusti amato, che voi non amaste" (Letter 28, I, 95). Through an envoy, Bernabò Visconti, the tyrant of Milan, sought Catherine's intervention with the pope after his excommunication in January of 1373. Catherine wrote this letter to Visconti, urging him to change his ruthless ways. Noffke dates this between June 7 and July 24, 1375.

³¹ "Sapete che siamo tutti debitori a Dio, però che ciò che noi abbiamo, abbiamo solo per gratia e per amore inestimabile.... Questo è il debito che noi abbiamo tratto da Dio, e questo debito vuole che gli sia renduto, cioè amore per amore" (Letter 21, I, 65). Noffke places this letter between February and April 1376, possibly during Holy Week, April 6 - 11, 1376.

goodness: "The one who knows more loves more, and who loves more receives more. Your merit is measured according to the measure of your love."³² For this reason, Catherine impresses upon her mother, Monna Lapa, her responsibility to make herself aware of God's goodness: "You ought to strive, with true and holy attention, to know that existence is not your own, and to recognize that your being is from God, and the many gifts and graces you have received and receive every day."³³

The Effect of Sin

It is within this context of God's gratuitous love and the goodness of creation that Catherine understands sin. The Father explains the meaning of sin in *Il Dialogo*:

I am that one who is, and you are not through yourselves, but you are made by Me, the Creator of all the things that share in being, except of sin, which is not and so is not made by Me. Since it is not in Me, it is not worthy of being loved. So the creature offends, because he loves that which he ought not to love, namely sin. And he who is held and obliged to love Me, hates Me who am supremely good, and I have given him being with such a fire of love.³⁴

Sin is the failure to respond to God's love, which failure has its basis in blindness to and ingratitude for the many graces and gifts received from God. Sin is rooted in "ingratitude, from which proceeds every evil."³⁵ This blindness and ingratitude began with the very first human being, Adam, as the Father states in *Il Dialogo*: "He [Adam] was held to rendering Me glory. And he has taken it from Me and wanted to give it to himself for which [reason] he broke the obedience that I set for him and he became an enemy to Me."³⁶ Being oblivious of God's goodness to him, Adam easily fell into disobedience and by his actions, separated himself from God:

Heaven was closed through the sin of Adam, who would not know his dignity, considering with what great providence and ineffable love I had created him. So be-

³² "E chi più cognosce più ama, e chi più ama più riceve. Il merito vostro v'è misurato secondo la misura de l'amore" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXI, 407).

³³ "E però dovete con vera e santa sollecitudine studiare di cognoscere, voi non essere, e l'esser vostro ricognoscerlo da Dio, e tanti doni e grazie quante avete ricevute da lui, e ricevete tutto di" (Letter 1, I, 3). Noffke locates this letter between late August and early September 1377.

³⁴ "Però che io sono colui che so', e voi non sete per voi medesimi, se non quanto sete fatti da me, il quale so' creatore di tutte le cose che partecipano essere, eccetto che del peccato che non è, e però non è fatto da me. E perchè non è in me, non è degno d'essere amato. E però offende la creatura, perchè ama quello che non debba amare, cioè il peccato, e odia me; che è tenuta e obligata d'amarmi, ché so' sommamente buono, e o'gli dato l'essere con tanto fuoco d'amore" (*Il Dialogo*, XVIII, 56).

³⁵ "Ingratitudine, unde procede ogni male" (*Il Dialogo*, XXXI, 86).

³⁶ "Era tenuto di rendermi gloria, ed egli me la tolse e volsela dare a sè; per la qual cosa trapassò l'obediencia mia posta a lui e diventommi nimico" (*Il Dialogo*, XV, 51).

cause he did not know it therefore he fell into disobedience, and from disobedience he fell to impurity with pride and pleasing the woman, preferring to be pleasing and to condescend to his companion... So through this disobedience all the evils then came and have come.³⁷

Adam's sin affected all of his offspring: "All of you contracted this poison."³⁸ The dignity and beauty that God had given the first parents was marred by sin.³⁹ Reason became clouded.⁴⁰ Humanity became weak, as the rebellion of flesh and the inclination to evil were transmitted from parent to child.⁴¹ Sin disordered human-

³⁷ "Essendo serrato il cielo per la colpa d'Adam - il quale non cognobbe la sua dignità, riguardando con quanta provvidenzia e amore ineffabile Io l'avevo creato, unde, perchè egli non la cognobbe però cadde nella disobbedienza, e dalla disobbedienza a la immondizia, con superbia e piacere femminile: volendo più tosto piacere e consendere alla compagna sua.... così per questa disobbedienza vennero e sono venuti poi tutti quanti i mali." (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXV, 430-431).

³⁸ "Tutti contraeste di questo veleno" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXV, 431).

³⁹ "The mud of the human race was rotted through the sin of the first man, Adam. And so all of you, vessels made of this mud, were rotted and were not disposed to have eternal life." "Perché la massa de l'umana generazione era corrotta per lo peccato del primo uomo Adam; e però tutti voi, vaselli fatti di questa massa, eravate corrotti e non disposti ad avere vita eterna" (*Il Dialogo*. XIV, 47). For a similar reference to the effects of the Fall, see *Oratio X*.

⁴⁰ "The foolish and ungrateful person is so miserable because so much of his dignity is taken away, as is the light of reason and the life of grace and liberty. The person is made a servant of the devil and of sin which is not anything!" "Quanto è miserabile lo stolto e ingrato uomo che si tolle tanta dignità quanto è il lume della ragione, e la vita della Grazia, e la libertà essendosi fatto servo del dimonio e del peccato, che non è alcuna cosa!" (Letter 299, IV, 256-257). This letter was sent to Ristoro Canigiani. Noffke dates this letter between June 25 and July 15, 1378. For another reference on the effect of sin, see Letter 29.

⁴¹ "The human person is weak because he has received the weak nature from his father since the father is not able to give the son another nature than that which he has in himself. And it is inclined to evil through the rebellion of his frail flesh, which he has received from his father. So our nature is weak and inclined to every evil because all of us are descended from and were generated by the first father, Adam. All of us have come from the same mud. Since he had broken away from the supreme strength of You, eternal Father, he became weak and because he had rebelled against You then he found rebellion in himself. So having left Your supreme goodness and strength, he found himself weak and inclined to every evil." "L'uomo è debile, perché ha ricevuta la natura debile dal padre suo, che il padre non può dare al figliuolo altra natura che di quella che egli ha in sé, ed è inchinevole al male per la rebellione della fragile carne sua, la quale anco ha ricevuta dal padre suo; sì che la natura nostra è debile e atta a ogni male perché tutti siamo discesi e generati dal primo padre Adam, tutti siamo esciti d'una medesima massa; el quale perché si parti dalla somma fortezza di te, Padre eterno, diventò debile, e perché fu ribello a te però trovò rebellione in se medesimo, unde, essendo partito dalla somma bontà e fortezza tua, si trovò debile e atto ad ogni male" (*Oratio IX*, 98). Catherine prayed this prayer on Tuesday, March 1, 1379, while at Rome.

ity's relationship with the rest of creation.⁴² As humanity had become oriented away from God, virtue was ineffective.⁴³

In seeking freedom, Adam, Eve, and their offspring became enslaved to sin: "O human blindness that does not consider your dignity. What is great is made small. From governing you are made a servant of the vilest ruler you could have because you are made a servant and slave of sin. And you become as that which you serve. Sin is nothing and so you become nothing. It has taken away life from you and given you death."⁴⁴ On account of sin, the ability to love turned from God to selfish love of oneself: "In this life one tastes the pledge of hell."⁴⁵

Sin, because it is committed against the goodness of God, takes on a terrible seriousness with Catherine. She uses strong language to describe the broken relationship between God and humanity. She asserts: "Through the sin of Adam the whole human race fell into war with God."⁴⁶ The descendants of Adam are alienated from God and have "become enemies"⁴⁷ to God. So severe is this break in the relationship that Catherine refers to "the anger of your Father."⁴⁸

This language may seem discordant with Catherine's teachings on the goodness of God in creation. Nevertheless, her strong expressions echo biblical language. In

⁴² "Through the sin of Adam, this garden sprouted thorns, where before there were fragrant flowers, pure with innocence and the greatest sweetness. Everything was obedient to him but through his sin and the disobedience he committed, he found rebellion in himself and in all creatures." "Il quale giardino per lo peccato d'Adam germinò spine, dove in prima ci erano fiori odoriferi, pure d'innocenza e di grandissima soavità. Ogni cosa era obediante a l'uomo, ma per la colpa e disobbedienza commessa trovò ribellione in sè e in tutte le creature" (*Il Dialogo*, CXL, 449).

⁴³ "Know that in the beginning, they were so bitter that no virtue led to the port of life, since the decay of the disobedience of Adam was not yet lifted with the obedience of the Word, the only begotten Son of God." "Sapete che in prima erano sì agre, che neuna virtù ci conduceva a porto di vita, perocchè la marcia della disobbedienza di Adam non era levata con l'obediencia del Verbo, unigenito figliuolo di Dio" (Letter 27, I, 91-92). This letter was sent to Martino, the Vallombrosian abbot of Passignano. Noffke places this letter in either February or March 1376.

⁴⁴ "O cechità umana, che non raguardi la tua dignità! Che di grande se' fatto piccolo, di signore se' fatto servo della più vile signoria che possi avere, però che tu se' fatto servo e schiavo del peccato, e tale diventi quale è quella cosa che tu servi. Il peccato è non cavelle, adunque tu se' fatto non cavelle. Àssi tolta la vita e data la morte" (*Il Dialogo*, XXXV, 91).

⁴⁵ "[I]n questa vita gusta l'arra dell'inferno" (Letter 299, IV, 255).

⁴⁶ "[P]er il peccato d'Adam tutta l'umana generazione cadde in guerra con Dio" (Letter 103, II, 131). This letter was sent to Bernuccio di Piero and Bernardo de Belforti, charging them to make peace with their enemies. Noffke dates this letter between late August and October 1377. For another reference to war with God, see Letter 309.

⁴⁷ "[C]he, essendo fatti nemici" (Letter 184, III, 116). This letter is to the Prior and brothers of the *Compagnia della Vergine Maria*, a Siense charitable brotherhood. This letter was written near Holy Week of 1377.

⁴⁸ "[L]ira del Padre tuo" (Letter 223, III, 286). Noffke puts this letter in April 1376, and possibly soon after Easter, April 13.

Romans, Paul instructs his readers, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18). In the same letter he alludes to our condition before reconciliation with Christ as "when we were enemies" (Rom. 5:10). Ephesians describes humans as "the children of wrath by nature" (Eph. 2:3). Colossians similarly states, "And you, who were alienated and enemies" (Col. 1:21).

The tradition was able to interpret these passages within the context of the entire revelation. Augustine, for instance, notes that, although we were enemies of God with regard to sin, God was disposed to be compassionate towards us.⁴⁹ The seriousness with which Catherine viewed sin is illustrated by the harsh penances that she inflicted upon her body in atonement for her sins and the sins of others. Nevertheless, Catherine's allusions to God's anger become her occasions of demonstrating God's love.

For Catherine, the seriousness of sin only heightens God's gracious mercy. This is evident when she reflects upon God's desire to create humanity, knowing that humanity would choose sin. She asserts that these sins impede God's will so that the person "could not come to that end for which You created her."⁵⁰ Catherine marvels that the foreknowledge of these sins did not restrain God from creating humanity: "You pretended You didn't see, but You fixed Your eye on the beauty of Your creature, with whom You, as a crazy person and drunk with love, have fallen in love, and with love, You drew her from Yourself, giving her being in Your image and likeness."⁵¹

⁴⁹ St. Augustine, when he probes the meaning of such terms in the *De Trinitate*, remarks: "For the wrath of God is not, as is that of man, perturbation of the mind.... Neither were we enemies to God, except as sins are enemies to righteousness; which being forgiven, such enmities come to an end. And certainly He loved them even while still enemies." St. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, XIII, 16, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, III, 179. Augustine bolsters his teaching with Paul's letter to the Romans. Paul asserts: "So it is proof of God's own love for us, that Christ died for us while we were still sinners...while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Rom. 5:8, 10). In the same letter, Paul likewise insists: "He did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for the sake of all of us" (Rom. 8:32). For Catherine's opinion that humanity could not continue in existence without God, see Letter 16.

⁵⁰ "You knew that the sin would impede Your truth. Indeed, it impeded Your creatures, with the result that it [Your truth] was not fulfilled in them, so that they were not able to come to the end for which You created them." "E cognoscesti che la colpa doveva impedire la verità tua; anco impediva la creatura, chè non s'adempiva in lei, ciò è che non poteva pervenire al fine per lo quale tu la creavi" (*Oratio* IV, 44). This prayer was made by Catherine on Friday, February 18, 1379, while she was in Rome.

⁵¹ "Tu facesti vista quasi di non vedere, ma fermasti l'occhio nella bellezza della tua creatura, della quale tu come pazzo ed ebbro d'amore t'inamorasti, e per amore la traesti di te dandole l'essere alla imagine e similitudine tua" (*Oratio* IV, 46).

For Catherine, the explanation of God's actions always returns to love. Even though cognizant of the Fall, God chooses to see beauty in the creation of humanity: "You lifted Your eyes from this offense which had to be, and You fixed it solely on the beauty of Your creature, for if You had set Your primary focus on that offense You would have forgotten the love which You had in creating humanity. This sin was not hidden from You, but You fixed Your love on us, because You are nothing other than a fire of love, crazy over what You have made."⁵² Even sin cannot impede God from bringing about the purpose of human creation. God loves humanity too much.

The Incarnation as God's Response to Sin

For Catherine, God's desire to heal the broken relationship with humanity clearly manifests the immensity of God's love. In her prayer on the feast of the Annunciation in 1379, Catherine ponders God's determination to save humanity: "If I consider Your great council, eternal Trinity, I see that in Your light You saw the dignity and nobility of the human race. Just as love constrained You to draw us out from You, so that same love constrained You to buy us back, seeing we were lost."⁵³ Catherine's use of the words "dignity" and "nobility" to characterize unredeemed humanity nuances her other descriptions of fallen nature.

Catherine identifies the compassion that moved God to save humanity with the same love that caused God to create humanity: "This compassion flowed from the fountain of love with which You had created Your creature. And because humanity pleased You so much, after it had lost the garment of innocence, You were moved to clothe it again with Your grace, leading it back to its first state."⁵⁴

⁵² "Anco levasti gli occhi tuoi da questa offesa che doveva essere e solamente il fermasti nella bellezza della creatura, che se tu avessi posto el principale vedere in quella offesa tu averesti dimenticato l'amore che avevi a creare l'uomo. Già non ti fu nascosto questo, ma fermastiti ne l'amore, perchè tu non se' altro che fuoco d'amore pazzo della fattura tua" (*Oratio* IV, 46). Such an image is garnered from the tradition and yet, as is typical with Catherine's use of images, it takes on a new twist. There is a biblical background for speaking of God as "fire." In Exodus, Yahweh preceded the Hebrew people through the desert as a pillar of fire during the night (Exod. 13:22). Yahweh descended on Mt. Sinai for the theophany before Moses, "in the form of fire" (Exod. 19:18). In Deuteronomy 4:24, Moses told the people, "Yahweh your God is a consuming fire." In these biblical precedents, fire suggests God's greatness and power, but with Catherine the fire is God's love.

⁵³ "Se io considero il grande consiglio tuo, Trinità eterna, veggio che nel lume tuo vedesti la dignità e nobilità de l'umana generazione; unde, sì come l'amore ti costrinse a trare l'uomo di te, così quello medesimo amore ti costrinse a ricomprario, essendo perduto" (*Oratio* XI, 122). Catherine delivered this prayer on the feast of the Annunciation, March 25, 1379, while she was at Rome.

⁵⁴ "La quale pietà procedette dalla fonte de l'amore col quale tu avevi creata la tua creatura. E perchè ella molto ti piaceva, avendo ella perduto el vestimento della innocenzia, tu ti movesti a

When Catherine attempts to moderate Pope Gregory XI's harsh approach to the rebellious people of Florence, she appeals to the example of God's loving solution to save rebellious humanity. God chooses what Catherine calls "a pleasing way,"⁵⁵ realizing that, since humanity is made of love in both body and soul, the human heart is best taken with love. Catherine marvels at this wisdom of God in relation to humanity:

God, seeing that we are so inclined to love, directly casts to us the hook of love, giving us the Word of His only-begotten Son, taking our humanity to make a great peace.... With love He has drawn us and with His kindness He has conquered our malice so that every heart ought to be drawn because greater love was not able to be shown, as He said, than to give His life for his friend.⁵⁶

God's love for humanity is so great that God humbles Himself so that He may be better known by humanity:

But in order that I might see and might know You in myself and so we might have perfect knowledge of You, You united Yourself with us, descending from the great height of Your Godhead even to the lowliness of the mud of our humanity, because the lowliness of my understanding was not able to comprehend nor to consider Your grandeur. In order that with my littleness, I might be able to see Your greatness, You made Yourself a little one, enclosing the greatness of Your Godhead in the littleness of our humanity. And so You have manifested Yourself to us in the Word, Your only begotten Son. So I have known You, abyss of charity, in myself in this Word.⁵⁷

Catherine asserts that even more than Creation, the Incarnation manifests God's love because the Incarnation is the gift of God's own self:

Truly You showed that You loved us before we were, when You wished to draw us out from Yourself only for love. But greater love You showed giving Yourself, shut-

riverstirla della grazia tua riducendola allo stato di prima" (*Oratio* VIII, 80). This prayer was composed by Catherine on Shrove Tuesday, February 22, 1379, while Catherine was at Rome.

⁵⁵ "Uno modo piacevole" (Letter 196, III, 160). Noffke dates this letter in February 1376.

⁵⁶ "E però Dio, vedendo che elli è tanto atto ad amare, drittamente elli gitta el l'amo dell'amore, donandoci el verbo dell'unigenito suo Figliuolo, prendendo la nostra umanità per fare una grande pace.... Si che con l'amore ci à tratti e con la sua benignità à vinta la nostra malizia, in tanto che ogni cuore dovrebbe essere tratto, però che maggiore amore non poteva mostrare, e così disse elli, che dare la vita per l'amico suo" (Letter 196, III, 161).

⁵⁷ "Ma a ciò che io vedesse e cognoscesse te in me e così avessimo perfetto cognoscimento di te, tu uniste te in noi, discendendo dalla grande altezza della deità tua in fine alla bassezza del loto della nostra umanità, perché la bassezza de l'intelletto mio non poteva comprendere nè riguardare l'altezza tua, però, a ciò che con la mia piccolezza io potesse vedere la grandezza tua, tu ti facesti parvolo, rinchiudendo la grandezza della deità tua nella piccolezza della nostra umanità; e così ti se' manifestato a noi nel Verbo de l'unigenito tuo Figliuolo. Così ho cognosciuto te, abisso di carità in me, in questo Verbo" (*Oratio* IV, 38-40). For Catherine's prayer on God's desire to be known through the Incarnation, see Letter 253.

ting Yourself today in the base little sack of our humanity. And what more were You able to give, than to give Yourself? So truly You are able to say, "What ought I or was I able to do that I have not done for You?"⁵⁸

For Catherine, the Incarnation is an expression of self-giving not only of the Son but also of the entire Trinity:

O Godhead, O Godhead, what manifests Your goodness and greatness? The gift You have given to humanity. And what gift have You given humanity? All of Yourself, God, eternal Trinity. Where have You given Yourself? In the stable of our humanity, that truly had become a stable, a place for animals, that is with deadly sins.... So You, God, have given Yourself completely, conforming Yourself with our humanity.⁵⁹

Gustaf Aulén, in his classic work, *Christus Victor*, criticizes the medieval theologians for separating the Incarnation from the Redemption.⁶⁰ Catherine, however, clearly identifies the inception of the Redemption with the Incarnation. Her image of grafting exemplifies this relationship between the Incarnation and the Redemption:

"Life was grafted in death, so that we dead have had life through union with Him since God was grafted into humanity."⁶¹ The same love that moved God to create humanity moves the Trinity to engraft the Son of God into humanity:

⁵⁸ "Ben dimostrasti che tu amasti l'uomo prima che egli fusse, quando tu el volesti trare di te solo per amore; ma maggiore amore gli mostrasti dando te medesimo, rinchiudendoti oggi nel vile saccuccio della sua umanità. E che più potevi dare, che dare te medesimo? Unde veramente tu gli puoi dire: 'Che t'ho io dovuto o potuto fare che io non l'abbi fatto?'" (*Oratio* XI, 122-124).

⁵⁹ "O Deità, Deità, chi manifesta la bontà e grandezza tua? El dono che tu hai dato a l'uomo. E che dono gli hai dato? Tutto te Dio, Trinità eterna. In che te gli se' dato? Nella stalla della nostra umanità, che drittamente era fatta stalla, recettacolo d'animali, ciò è de' peccati mortali...si che tu ti se' dato tutto te Dio conformandoti con la nostra umanità" (*Oratio* XXII, 250). Catherine made this prayer on Wednesday, February 16, 1379. Catherine, of course, recognizes the theological distinction regarding the external actions of the members of the Trinity, possibly even as it is taught by St. Thomas. He writes: "Assumption holds two notes, the act itself and its term. The act comes from the divine power, common to the three persons; but the term is a person. Therefore, what belongs to the act of assuming is common to the three persons; what belongs to its meaning as term belongs to one person in such a way that it does not belong to another. For the three persons caused the human nature to be united in one person, the Son" (III, 3,4). Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 48, trans. R. J. Hennessey, O.P. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1976), 97. For Catherine's prayer on the self-giving of the Trinity, see *Il Dialogo* CXL and *Oratio* XX.

⁶⁰ Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor* (New York: Macmillan Co, 1934), 50.

⁶¹ "[L]a vita s'è innestata nella morte, si che noi, morti, aviamo avuta la vita per l'unione sua, poi che Dio fu innestato nell'uomo" (Letter 101, II, 120). This letter was sent to Cardinale Iacopo Orsini, the official protector of the Sienese republic at the papal court in Avignon. Noffke dates this letter between March 15 and 31, 1376. For a similar passage, see Letter 101.

You, high and eternal Trinity, just as one drunk with love and crazy for Your creature, seeing that this tree was not able to bear other than death because it was separated from You, Life, You gave the remedy with that same love with which you had created us, grafting your Deity in the dead tree of our humanity.... So by this engrafting, death is dissolved.⁶²

Jesus is engrafted twice, the first time in the Incarnation and the second time at the crucifixion:

You grafted Yourself as a fruit on two trees. The first, to our human nature that You might show to us the invisible truth of the eternal Father, which truth You Yourself are. You made the second grafting with Your body upon the tree of the most holy cross, upon which tree neither the nails nor any other thing held You except the immeasurable love that You had for us. And all this You did to manifest the truth of the will of the Father, Who does not want other than our salvation. With this grafting You gave Your blood, which through the union with the divine nature has given life to us.⁶³

Through the Incarnation, God becomes bound to humanity: "You bound God in humanity, and as it is said, humanity in God, when You, eternal Father, gave us the Word, Your Son, and You united the divine nature with the human nature."⁶⁴ Jesus' assumption of human nature gives renewed dignity to human nature: "It is very good...to consider the dignity in which our soul and miserable flesh have come through the union which God has made with humanity, uniting the divine nature with our human nature."⁶⁵ The Incarnation manifests the extent to which God val-

⁶² "[P]er la qual cosa tu, alta ed eterna Trinità, si come ebbro d'amore e pazzo della tua creatura, vedendo che questo arbore non poteva fare frutto altro che di morte perché era separato da te vita, gli desti el rimedio con quello medesimo amore con che tu l'avevi creato, innestando la deità tua ne l'arbore morto della nostra umanità....unde per questo innesto si dissolve la morte" (*Oratio* X, 106-108).

⁶³ "[A]vesti a noi t'innestasti si come frutto in due arbori: in prima a la natura umana acciò che manifestassi a noi la verità invisibile del Padre eterno, la quale verità tu esso se'; el secondo innesto facesti del corpo tuo in su l'arbore della santissima croce, in sul quale arbore non ti tennero chiavelli né alcuna altra cosa se non l'amore smisurato che avesti a noi. E tutto questo facesti per manifestare la verità della volontà del Padre, che non vuole altro che la nostra salute. Di questo innesto fu prodotto il sangue tuo, el quale per l'unione della natura divina ha dato a noi vita" (*Oratio* XVIII, 202). The date and location on which this prayer was made are uncertain, although a date around September 14, 1379 is possible.

⁶⁴ "Tu legasti Dio nell'uomo, come detto è, e l'uomo in Dio, quando tu, Padre eterno, ci donasti il Verbo del Figliuolo tuo, e unisti la natura divina colla natura umana" (Letter 95, II, 101). This letter was sent to some young people in Florence. Misciattelli identifies these youths as "figliuoli adottivi di Don Giovanni." Noffke places this letter in October 1377, or shortly after.

⁶⁵ "Molto è buono...ragguardare la dignità, in che è venuta l'anima nostra e la miserabile carne, per l'unione che Dio ha fatto nell'uomo, unita la natura divina con la natura nostra umana" (Letter 44, I, 177). This letter was written to the notary, Antonio di Ciolo. Noffke estimates that this letter was written in either October or November, 1377.

ues humanity: "What is one able to see that is greater than to see God humbled to humanity... as if humanity had to hold God and not God humanity?"⁶⁶

In *Il Dialogo*, the Father contrasts the image humanity received in creation with the image Jesus took upon Himself: "You clearly see that in having given you My image and likeness and, since you lost grace through sin, in order to restore you to the life of grace, I united My nature in you, hiding it with your humanity. And so, you being My image, I took your image, taking human form."⁶⁷ In Jesus' Incarnation, God takes the image of humanity: "And so You not only created humanity in Your image and likeness, but also You have his likeness in You in some way, and so You are in him and he in You."⁶⁸

Not only does the dignity of humanity begin to be restored but humanity receives the beginning of a process of divinization through the Incarnation: "You, God, have made Yourself human, and humanity is made divine."⁶⁹ In another passage, Catherine repeats this idea: "If you look clearly, humanity is made God and God is made human through the union of the divine nature in the human nature."⁷⁰

While Jesus' preaching and teaching proclaim the good news of the Father's love, the humanity of Jesus is itself a teaching:

He taught you not only with words but with example. From the beginning of His birth even to the last moment of His life, He taught you this teaching in example.... He was supreme wealth through the union of the divine nature, through which He is one with Me and I, who am eternal wealth, with Him. And if you want to see one humbled and in great poverty, consider God become human, clothed with the lowliness of your humanity.⁷¹

⁶⁶ "Che si può più vedere, che è vedere Dio umiliato all'uomo, nè più nè meno che se l'uomo avesse a tenere Dio, e non Dio l'uomo?" (Letter 28, I, 95). For other passages in which Catherine marvels at the wonder of the Incarnation, see *Il Dialogo* CXXXIV and Letters 133 and 342.

⁶⁷ "Bene vedi tu che avendovi data la imagine e similitudine mia, e avendo voi perduto la grazia per lo peccato, per rendervi la vita della grazia unii in voi la mia natura, velandola della vostra umanità. E così essendo voi imagine mia, presi la imagine vostra, prendendo forma umana" (*Il Dialogo*, XII, 39).

⁶⁸ "E così non solamente creasti l'uomo a la tua imagine e similitudine, ma anco in te in alcuno modo hai la similitudine sua: e così tu se' in lui ed egli in te" (*Oratio* XVII, 196).

⁶⁹ "Tu, Dio, se' fatto uomo, e l'uomo è fatto Dio" (*Il Dialogo*, XIII, 44).

⁷⁰ "[S]e tu vedi bene, l'uomo è fatto Dio e Dio è fatto uomo per l'unione della natura divina nella natura umana" (*Il Dialogo*, XV, 51). Catherine may have received this teaching on transformation through Domenico Cavalca, who expresses it thus: "Through the Incarnation of Christ...one, now, is able to say that God is human and humanity is divine." "Per la incarnazione di Cristo...ora si può dire con il vero, che Dio è uomo, e l'uomo è Dio." Domenico Cavalca, *Lo Specchio della Croce*, 240.

⁷¹ "E non ve la insegna con parole solamente ma con esempio; unde, dal principio della sua natività infino a l'ultimo della vita, in esempio v'insegnò questa dottrina.... Egli fusse somma ricchezza per l'unione della natura divina, unde egli è una cosa con meco, e io con lui, che so' eterna ricchezza. E se tu il vuoi vedere umiliato e in grande povertà, riguarda Dio essere fatto uomo,

One of the images Catherine applies to the Incarnate Christ is that of the bridegroom of humanity, which is an idea suggested by the Gospel of Matthew (Mt. 25:1-13). Catherine portrays the Incarnation as the decisive moment in this spousal relationship: "The creature was made a spouse when God took human nature."⁷² With the Incarnation, Jesus begins the struggle to win back His bride, humanity: "As soon as this Word was grafted into our flesh in the womb of Mary.... He was placed in the field of this life to fight for His spouse, to take her away from the hands of the devil who possessed her as an adulteress."⁷³

Catherine, also, identifies the manifestation of this espousal with Jesus' first shedding of blood: "And God having made her a bride of the Word, His Son, this gentle Jesus espoused her with His flesh. For, when He was circumcised, such flesh was lifted in the circumcision as is a tip of a ring, in a sign that as a bridegroom He wished to espouse the human race."⁷⁴ Catherine compares the circumcision to a pledge or first payment of the total giving of self that was to take place on the cross: "See that the fire of divine charity has given us the ring, not of gold but of his purest flesh, this most gentle Father has made a marriage feast with us, and not with the flesh of animals but of His precious body, and the lamb is this food, roasted at the fire of charity on the wood of the sweet cross."⁷⁵

vestito della viltà de l'umanità vostra" (*Il Dialogo*, CLI, 508-509). The prophet, Hosea, had represented the unfaithful people of Israel as adulterers but Catherine makes an even stronger charge: adultery with the devil.

⁷² "Sposa fu fatta la creatura, quando Dio prese la natura umana" (Letter 143, II, 278). The text of the letter gives August 4 as the date. Other references indicate that the year is 1375. This letter was sent to Giovanna, the Queen of Naples. For another reference to humanity as the adulterous spouse, see Letter 107.

⁷³ "Subitochè questo verbo fu innestato nella carne nostra nel ventre di Maria...posto nel campo di questa vita a combattere per la sposa sua, per trarla delle mani del demonio, che la possedeva come adultera" (Letter 97, II, 111). This letter was sent to Monna Pavola and to Catherine's disciples. Noffke dates this letter in early April 1376. For another reference on the need to return Christ's love, see Letter 217.

⁷⁴ "E, avendola Dio fatta sposa del Verbo del suo Figliuolo, il quale dolce Gesù la sposò colla carne sua perocchè, quand' egli fu circonciso, tanta carne si levò nella circoncisione quanta è una estremità d'uno anello, in segno che come sposo voleva sposare l'umana generazione" (Letter 262, IV, 116). Noffke identifies October 26, 1378, as the date of this letter. This letter was sent to Tora Gambacorti, daughter of the ruler of Pisa. Tora, a very young widow, was encouraged by Catherine to enter religious life. After prolonged struggles with her family, she became a Dominican nun, taking the name "Clara." In 1385, she founded the monastery of San Domenico, which is considered to be the first Dominican house of the strict observance. She was beatified by Pius VIII in 1830.

⁷⁵ "Attendete, che 'l fuoco della divina carità ci à donato l'anello, non d'oro ma della purissima carne sua: àcci fatte le nozze questo dolcissimo Padre, e non di carne d'animale, ma del prezioso corpo suo, che è, questo cibo agnello, arrostito al fuoco della carità in sul legno della dolce croce" (Letter 143, II, 279). For Catherine's application of the spousal image to the individual soul, see *Oratio* XII.

To illustrate the Incarnation, Catherine uses the image of the chariot of fire, a figure that was possibly suggested to her by the chariot that took Elijah into heaven (2 Kgs 2:11-12). She pictures the humanity of Jesus as a chariot: "The Word, His Son, has come in the chariot of our humanity, filled with the fire of love, showing us with His blood the will of the Father in order to fulfill it in us."⁷⁶ In another instance, Catherine modifies the image so that the person, Jesus, is the chariot: "Therefore God the Father, constrained by the fire of His Charity, sent us the Word, His only Son, Who came as a chariot of fire, manifesting to us, the fire of ineffable love and mercy of the eternal Father, teaching us the doctrine of truth and showing us the way of love which we ought to hold."⁷⁷

The Incarnate Christ is the bridge between God and humanity.⁷⁸ This allegory is Catherine's most thoroughly developed image, covering more than one hundred chapters of *Il Dialogo*. According to this image, the world was submerged in a deluge, as a result of Adam's sin. The Father gave the Incarnate Jesus as the bridge by which humanity might come to Him over the stormy waters: "First I want you to look on the bridge of My only-begotten Son and see its greatness as it stretches from heaven to earth. I mean, consider that it has united the earth of your humanity with the greatness of the Godhead. And therefore I say that it stretches from

⁷⁶ "Il Verbo del Figliuolo suo, che è venuto nel carro della nostra umanità pieno di fuoco d'amore, manifestandoci col sangue suo la volontà del Padre per adempirla in noi" (Letter 122, II, 203). Noffke places this letter in late August or early September 1377. This letter was written to Salvi di Pietro, a goldsmith in Siena.

⁷⁷ "E però Dio Padre, costretto dal fuoco della sua Carità, ci mandò il Verbo dell'unico suo Figliuolo, il quale venne come uno carro di fuoco, manifestandoci il fuoco dell'amore ineffabile e la misericordia del Padre eterno; insegnandoci la dottrina della verità, e mostrandoci la via dell'amore, la quale noi doviamo tenere" (Letter 35, I, 131). This letter was written to three Olivetan monks, Frate Niccolò di Ghida, Frate Giovanni Zerri, and Frate Niccolò di Giacomo di Vannuzzo. Noffke locates this letter between December 20, 1377, and January 15, 1378.

⁷⁸ Gregory the Great in his *Dialogorum Liber* describes a bridge over which the good pass (PL 77, 384). In *Il Dialogo*, CLXV, Catherine refers to the story of Mauro and Placido which can be found in *Dialogorum Liber*, II, 7. This suggests that Catherine is probably familiar with Cavalca's popular version of Gregory's book. It is possible that Gregory's story inspired this allegory in Catherine. Catherine may have also heard the idea of Christ as a bridge from her Carthusian friends. Their founder, St. Bruno writes: "The high priest (bridge maker) is made a bridge for us by which we pass to God." "Pontifex, id est factus nobis pons, quo transeamus ad Deum" (*Expositio in Epistolas Pauli*; PL 153, 501). Noffke suggests that Catherine may have in mind the famous Ponte Vecchio over the river Arno in Florence. This walled bridge had shops along its sides in Catherine's time as it does today. *Catherine of Siena: The Dialogue*, trans. Suzanne Noffke, O.P. (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 64, n.1.

heaven to the earth, that is, through the union which I have made with humanity."⁷⁹

For Catherine, the Incarnation is the inception of the redemption. God takes the initiative to heal the broken relationship with humanity. The Son of God incarnates the love of God because humanity is drawn by love. By assuming the human nature made in His image, the Son of God restores dignity to humanity. The love manifested in the Incarnation leads to the cross where it becomes most evident: "The generosity of the goodness of God and His inestimable charity... was well hidden to our roughness before the Word, the only-begotten Son of God, was incarnate. But because He wished to be our brother, He dressed Himself in the coarseness of our humanity. He was manifested to us. Then being lifted on high, the fire of His love was manifested to every creature and the heart was drawn out by the force of love."⁸⁰

The Significance of the Atonement for Catherine

In order to understand Catherine's teachings on the Atonement, it is necessary to compare and distinguish her teachings from other interpretations in the tradition. It is helpful to see the ways in which she repeats and she incorporates ideas from the tradition, even as she modifies them with her own interpretation.

The Traditional Interpretations of the Atonement

Why would the enormous generosity of God which was manifested in the Incarnation not be sufficient in itself to heal the broken relationship between God and humanity? Why did the Father ask an even greater self-giving by the Son to fully accomplish this reconciliation through suffering?

At times, Catherine answers these questions by emphasizing the seriousness of sin and the necessity of punishment and acquittal:

Such is the gravity of deadly sin that only one is sufficient to send the soul to hell.... It displeased and displeases God so much, that to punish the sin of Adam,

⁷⁹ "Ma innanzi voglio che rguardi il ponte de l'unigenito mio Figliuolo, e vede la grandezza sua che tiene dal cielo alla terra; cioè riguarda che è unita con la grandezza della deità la terra della vostra umanità. E però dico che tiene dal cielo alla terra: ciò è per l'unione che Io ò fatta ne l'uomo" (*Il Dialogo*, XXII, 61).

⁸⁰ "[L]a larghezza della bontà di Dio e la sua inestimabile carità...era bene nascoso alla grossità nostra, prima che 'l verbo unigenito Figliuolo di Dio incarnasse, ma poi che volse essere nostro fratello, vestendosi della grossità della nostra umanità, ci fu manifesto; essendo poi levato in alto acciò che 'l fuoco dell'amore fusse manifesto a ogni creatura, e tratto fusse il cuore per forza d'amore" (Letter 108, II, 147-148). Noffke suggests December 20-31, 1377, as the time in which this letter may have been written. For an appeal to love God, see Letter 254.

He sent the Word, His only-begotten Son and wished to punish it upon His body, although in Him there was no poison of sin. Nevertheless to satisfy the fault of humanity and not to leave it unpunished, He punished it upon the Word, His only begotten Son.⁸¹

The notion that God needed to punish sin on the body of Christ might appear to be a startling contrast to Catherine's basic emphasis on God's love. Yet, as we have seen with regard to God's "anger" at His "enemies," her explanations are attempts to fathom the mystery of the Redemption as it is presented in Scripture. Paul describes the redemption in terms of condemnation and acquittal: "For after one sin there was the judgment that brought condemnation; but the gift, after many transgressions, brought acquittal" (Rom. 5:16). Likewise, 1 Peter 3:18 asserts: "For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that He might lead you to God." Hebrews 10:12 portrays Jesus' death as a sacrifice: "When He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever." Mark 10:45 identifies Jesus' death as a ransom: "The Son of Man is come...to give His life as a ransom for many." Along similar lines, 1 Timothy 2:6 relates that "we have our redemption through His blood."

Catherine's approach to the necessity of atonement reflects not only the Scriptures but also the theological tradition. Gustaf Aulén, in his important study *Christus Victor*, grapples with the ways in which the Christian tradition has tried to understand the mystery of the Atonement. According to Aulén, a Christian in the fourteenth century would have been exposed to two basic approaches. The first is the classical approach of the Church Fathers and the second, which emphasizes God's justice, was developed particularly by medieval theologians.

Aulén summarizes the classical approach: "God enters into the world of sin and death that He may overcome the enemies that hold mankind in bondage and Himself accomplishes the redemptive work, for no power but the divine is adequate."⁸² God is the agent of redemption. This classical approach is also characterized by descriptions of a dualistic struggle between the forces of good and evil. A good example of this can be seen in the explanation of Irenaeus (d. c. 200):

For if man, who had been created by God that he might live, after losing life, through being injured by the serpent that had corrupted him, should not anymore

⁸¹ "E tanto è la gravezza del peccato mortale, che solo uno è sufficiente a mandare l'anima all'inferno....Tanto dispiacque a Dio e dispiace, che per punire il peccato di Adam, mandò il Verbo dell'Unigenito suo Figliuolo: e volselo punire sopra il corpo suo, conciosiacosa che in lui non fusse veleno di peccato. Nondimeno per satisfare alla colpa dell'uomo, e per non lassarla impunita, il puni sopra il Verbo dell'unigenito suo Figliuolo" (Letter 287, IV, 213). This letter was written to Frate Niccolò di Nanni and Don Pietro di Giovanni di Viva. Noffke locates this letter in either November or December 1377. For a similar reference to the seriousness of sin, see Letter 60.

⁸² Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 103.

return to life, but should be utterly abandoned to death, God would have been conquered, and the wickedness of the serpent would have prevailed over the will of God. But, inasmuch as God is invincible and long-suffering, He did indeed show Himself to be long-suffering in the matter of the correction of man and the probation of all...and by means of the second man did he bind the strong man and spoiled his goods, and abolished death, vivifying that man who had been in a state of death.... The first Adam became a vessel in his [Satan's] possession, whom he did hold under his power, that is, by bringing sin on him iniquitously, and under colour of immortality entailing death upon him. For, while promising that they should be as gods...he wrought death in them: wherefore he who had led men captive, was justly captured in his turn by God; but man, who had been led captive was loosed from the bonds of condemnation.⁸³

In the classical approach, the Incarnation is not separated but closely connected with Christ's death. Irenaeus's presentation exemplifies this close relation between the Incarnation and salvation. He interprets Jesus' saving mission by the concept of "recapitulation." In Irenaeus's explanation, the second Adam provides a remedy for the actions of the first Adam by redoing them, sanctifying each stage of life. Irenaeus explains: "When He became incarnate, and was made man, He commenced afresh the long line of human beings and furnished us in a brief comprehensive manner with salvation; so that what we had lost in Adam – namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God – that we might recover in Jesus Christ."⁸⁴

Aloys Grillmeier, S.J., identifies this close relation between Jesus' assumption of human nature and salvation as the "mystic doctrine of salvation." This doctrine, Grillmeier asserts, emphasizes "the foundation of redemption already laid in the *being* of Christ, not merely in his *acts*."⁸⁵ Gregory Nazianzen (d. 390) gives a succinct expression to this belief when he writes: "For that, which He has not assumed He has not healed; and that which is united to His Godhead is also saved."⁸⁶

Another example of this principle can be seen in Leo I's *Tome to Flavian*. In insisting on the integrity of Jesus' human nature against Eutyches, Leo (d. 461) stresses the importance of Jesus' assumption of our human nature in the redemption. He states: "Thus in the whole and perfect nature of true man was true God born, complete in what was His own, complete in what was ours. And by 'ours' we

⁸³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, in *The Ante-Nicene Father*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, vol. I (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985), XXIII, 1, 455-456; PG VIII, 955-956.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, XVIII, 1, 446; PG VII, 932.

⁸⁵ Aloys Grillmeier, S.J., *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, trans. J.S. Bowden (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1965), 466.

⁸⁶ Gregory Nazianzen, "Letter CI, To Cleodnius the Priest Against Apollinarius," in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Second Series, vol. VII (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), III, 440; PG XXXVII, 182-183.

mean what the Creator formed in us from the beginning and what He undertook to repair.... He took the form of a slave without stain of sin, increasing the human and not diminishing the divine."⁸⁷

In describing the reasons why Jesus needed to suffer death on the cross, the Patristic tradition generally chose not to be too specific. Thus, Gregory Nazianzen asks to whom was Jesus' blood offered as a ransom. If it was the devil, how could the ransom be given to him when the ransom was God Himself? The Father, who restrained Abraham from offering Isaac, would not delight in His Son's blood. Gregory concludes that the cross is the gift of the Son to the Father but cautions that reverent silence is preferable to further analysis:

Is it not evident that the Father accepts Him, but neither asked for Him nor demanded Him, but on account of the Incarnation, and because humanity must be sanctified by the humanity of God, that He might deliver us Himself, and overcome the tyrant, and draw us to Himself by the mediation of His Son, Who also arranged this to the honor of the Father, Whom it is manifest that He obeys in all things? So much have we said of Christ; the greater part of what we might say shall be revered with silence.⁸⁸

In certain Latin Fathers, there is the suggestion of an obligation of human satisfaction for sin. This may be found, for instance, in Tertullian's (d. 220/230) treatise, *On Repentance*, where he affirms: "For repentance is the price at which the Lord has determined to award pardon. He proposes the redemption of release from penalty at this compensating exchange of repentance."⁸⁹

Aulén asserts that this emphasis on human satisfaction only really develops in the medieval period. It finds its clearest expression in Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo?* Anselm argues that every creature acts towards the goal established by God. When someone acts against the will of God, that person has disrupted the order and the beauty of the universe. Anselm maintains that satisfaction is needed for the sake of the proper order of the universe, "It is necessary that satisfaction or punishment

⁸⁷ Leo the Great, "Letter XXVIII, To Flavian commonly called 'The Tome,'" in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Second Series, vol. XII (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 40; PL LIV, 763.

⁸⁸ Gregory Nazianzen, Oratio 45, "The Second Oration on Easter," in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Second Series, vol. VII, 22 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), III, 431; PG XXXVI, 653-654.

⁸⁹ Tertullian, *On Repentance*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, vol. III (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986), VI, 661. "Hoc enim pretio Dominus veniam addicere instituit; hac poenitentiae compensatione redimendam proponit impunitatem." Tertullian, *De Poenitentia*; PL 1, 1237.

follow every sin" (I, 15).⁹⁰ For Anselm, satisfaction is necessary for sin because the majesty of God has been offended. Without a voluntary payment of the debt against God, the sin cannot be forgiven. He insists: "God cannot remit sin without punishment" (I, 19).⁹¹

Anselm emphasizes that the satisfaction needs to be accomplished by a human being because humanity has sinned.⁹² Anselm, however, while placing the obligation of satisfaction on humanity, insists that only God could make the satisfaction because of the infinite nature of the offense. He concludes that only a God-Man can make satisfaction.⁹³ Aulén points out the legalistic nature of Anselm's solution as well as the strong emphasis on Christ's human responsibility.⁹⁴ Aulén observes: "The relation of man to God is treated by Anselm as essentially a legal relation for his whole effort is to prove that the atoning work is in accordance with justice."⁹⁵

Aulén faults Anselm for failing to recognize the significance of the Incarnation in the Redemption: "According to Anselm, Christ became man primarily in order that He might die."⁹⁶ Aulén points out that Anselm discards the dualistic approach of the Church Fathers with their mythological imagery of the struggle between God

⁹⁰ Anselm of Canterbury, *Why God Became Man and the Virginal Conception and Original Sin*, trans. by Joseph M. Collieran (Albany: Magi Books, 1969), 91. "Necesse est ut omne peccatum satisfactio aut poena sequatur." *Cur Deus homo? S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi Opera omnia* II (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1946), 74.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 105. "Nece Deus potest peccatum impunitum dimittere." *Opera omnia*, 85.

⁹² "For although we may say that God accomplished what that man accomplished, on account of the unity of person, nevertheless God did not need to descend from heaven to conquer the devil nor to contend against him by justice, to liberate man. But God did require man to conquer the devil and to make satisfaction by justice, because he had offended God by sin" (II, 19). *Ibid.*, 161. "Licet enim hoc quod homo ille fecit, deus dicatur fecisse propter unitatem personae, deus tamen non egebat ut de caelo descenderet ad vincendum diabolum, neque ut per iustitiam ageret contra illum ad liberandum hominem; sed ab homine deus exiebat ut diabolum vinceret, et qui per peccatum deum offenderat, per iustitiam satisfaceret." *Opera omnia*, 131.

⁹³ "If then...it is necessary that the heavenly city be completed among men and this cannot occur unless the satisfaction...is made, and if no one but God can make the satisfaction and no one but man is obliged to make it, then it is necessary that a God-Man make it" (II, 6). *Ibid.*, 124. "Si ergo...necesse est ut de hominibus perficiatur illa superna civitas, nec hoc esse valet, nisi fiat praedicta satisfactio, quam nec potest facere nisi deus nec debet nisi homo: necesse est ut eam faciat deus-homo." *Opera omnia*, 101.

⁹⁴ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 98.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

and the devil.⁹⁷ Anselm, however, while rejecting a mythological ransoming from the devil, considers the triumph over the devil necessary for the redemption.⁹⁸

Jaroslav Pelikan in his book, *Jesus Through the Centuries*, comments on Anselm's influence in the development of Christian thought: "More than any other treatise between Augustine and the Reformation on any other doctrine of the Christian faith, Anselm's essay has shaped the outlook not only of Roman Catholics but of most Protestants, many of whom have paid him the ultimate compliment of not even recognizing that their version of the wisdom of the cross comes from him, but attributing it to the Bible itself."⁹⁹ Vincent Taylor, in his work, *The Atonement in New Testament Teaching*, while critiquing Anselm's explanation, suggests that Anselm at least captured part of the truth of the Atonement: "The words of Anselm: 'Nondum considerasti, quanti ponderis sit peccatum' ('Not yet hast thou considered how great is the weight of sin'), ought to haunt the imagination of the modern theologian, and equally the warning, not found in *Cur Deus homo?*: 'Not yet hast thou considered how strong is the love of God.'"¹⁰⁰

While Anselm's basic arguments found a prominent position in the Church, they were modified by the theologians who followed him. Joseph Colleran, in his introduction to *Cur Deus homo?*, observes: "Although his [Anselm's] notion of satisfaction was accepted and made classical, it had to be developed and clarified by others during the next century and a half, and the commonly accepted Catholic understanding has been synthesized by St. Thomas Aquinas."¹⁰¹

Thomas reasons that complete or "condign" satisfaction which could equal the fault and also make recompense for humanity in general is beyond the goodness of any individual or group, especially since the offense is in proportion to the dignity of God. He concludes, as does St. Anselm, that this atonement must be accom-

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁹⁸ "Take strict justice into account, and judge, in accordance with that, whether man gives God satisfaction equivalent to his sin, unless, by overcoming the devil, he restores exactly what he took from God by allowing himself to be conquered by the devil. Thus, just as by the very fact that man was conquered, the devil stole what belonged to God and God lost it, so by the very fact that man triumphs the devil loses what belonged to God and God regains it" (I, 23). Anselm of Canterbury, *Why God Became Man*, 112 "Intende in districtam iustitiam, et iudica secundum illam, utrum ad aequalitatem peccati homo satisfaciat deo, nisi id ipsum quod permittendo se vinci a diabolo deo abstulit, diabolus vincendo restituat; ut quemadmodum per hoc quod victus est, rapuit diabolus quod dei erat et deus perdidit, ita hoc quod vincat, perdat diabolus et deus recuperet." *Opera omnia*, 91.

⁹⁹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 106-107.

¹⁰⁰ Vincent Taylor, *The Atonement in New Testament Teaching* (London: Epworth Press, 1963), 9.

¹⁰¹ Joseph Colleran, Introduction, *Why God Became Man and the Virginal Conception and Original Sin*, 47.

plished by one who is both God and Man.¹⁰² When Thomas examines God's reasons for allowing the Passion, he indicates that the Passion of Christ satisfied for sins through justice, but mercy motivated God to give His Son since humanity was incapable of making satisfaction. Thomas notes that such satisfaction does not detract from God's mercy.¹⁰³

Thomas seems less bound than Anselm to a juridical notion of the atonement, acknowledging that God could have waived the satisfaction, without acting against justice because justice is dependent on the Divine Will.¹⁰⁴ Thomas also draws upon the earlier Patristic images, noting that as God had left humanity in the servitude of the devil, it was proper that humanity should be delivered from this slavery by Christ.¹⁰⁵

Thomas takes seriously the traditions he received both from the Fathers and from Anselm. Nevertheless, this does not restrict him from proposing other reasons for the suitability of the Passion. Thomas offers five considerations to illustrate why the passion of Christ was the best way to free humanity from sin: 1) that humanity would see how much it is loved and thus be aroused to love in return; 2) to give an example of obedience, humility, constancy, justice, and other virtues; 3) not only to free humanity from sin but to merit the grace of justification; 4) to give human beings a greater obligation to refrain from sin; and 5) that a greater dignity accrue to humanity.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² "For condign satisfaction the act of the one atoning should be infinite in worth, an act, that is, of one who is both God and man" (S.T., III, 1, 2, ad 2). "Unde oportuit, ad condignam satisfactionem, ut actio satisfaciens haberet efficiam infinitam, utputa Dei et hominis existens." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 48, trans. R. J. Hennessey, O.P. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1976), 14-15.

¹⁰³ "In so acting God manifested greater mercy than if He had forgiven sins without requiring satisfaction" (S.T., III, 46, 1, ad 3). "[E]t hoc fuit abundantioris misericordiae quam si peccata absque satisfactione dimisisset." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 54, trans. Richard T.A. Murphy, O.P. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1965), 6-7.

¹⁰⁴ "Even this justice depends upon the divine will which requires satisfaction for sin from the human race. For if God had wanted to free man from sin without any satisfaction at all, He would not have been acting against justice" (S.T., III, 46, 2 ad 3). "[H]aec etiam iustitia dependet ex voluntate divina, ad humano genere satisfactionem exigente pro peccato. Nam si voluisset absque omni satisfactione hominem a peccato liberare, contra iustitiam non fecisset." *Ibid.*, 10-11.

¹⁰⁵ "Although the devil assailed man unjustly, it was just that on account of sin man should be left by God in servitude to the devil. It was therefore proper that man should by justice be delivered from that slavery through Christ's atoning for him by His passion" (S.T., III, 46, 3 ad 3). "[L]icet diabolus injuste invaserit hominem, tamen homo propter peccatum juste erat sub servitute diaboli derelictus a Deo. Et ideo conveniens fuit ut per iustitiam homo a servitute diaboli liberaretur, Christo satisfaciens pro ipso per suam passionem" *Ibid.*, 14-15.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 46, 3.

Catherine's Refinement of Anselm's Explanation of the Atonement

Catherine's writings demonstrate the influence of Anselm, as mediated by Thomas, when she affirms the necessity of punishment for sin and the inability of sinful humanity to make satisfaction for the offenses made to the infinite God. Thus, in *Il Dialogo*, she depicts the Father explaining the impossibility of human suffering to atone for any sin: "Do you not know, My daughter, that all the sufferings which the soul bears or is able to be bear in this life, are not sufficient to punish one smallest sin? Because the offense is done to Me, who am Infinite Good, it demands infinite satisfaction."¹⁰⁷

Anselm's influence can again be seen as Catherine weighs the need for justice in the redemption. According to Catherine, the justice of God requires that "the punishment might flow from the fault."¹⁰⁸ The Father explains that humanity is not able to make satisfaction, "because the sin was done against Me, who am Infinite Goodness."¹⁰⁹ Catherine pictures a council composed of God's wisdom, power, mercy, and justice. Even as God's mercy wants to be merciful, justice insists: "Just as mercy is proper to You, so is justice. Your justice remains in eternity. So, since Your justice does not leave any evil unpunished, just as no good is unrewarded, humanity could not be saved because it could not make satisfaction to You for its sins."¹¹⁰

The dilemma between God's justice and mercy finds resolution in Jesus' suffering: "And so I satisfied My justice and fulfilled My divine mercy, which mercy wished to satisfy the fault of humanity and to dispose it to that good for which I had created him."¹¹¹ This satisfaction is possible because Jesus is both human and divine: "So the human nature united with My divine nature was sufficient to satisfy for the whole human race, not only through the suffering which He bore in the

¹⁰⁷ "Non sai tu figliuola mia, che tutte le pene che sostiene, o può sostenere l'anima in questa vita, non sono sufficienti a punire una minima colpa? Però che l'offesa che è fatta a me, che so' Bene infinito, richiede satisfazione infinita" (*Il Dialogo*, III, 7).

¹⁰⁸ "[D]ella colpa voleva la divina mia giustizia che n'escisse la pena" (*Il Dialogo*, XIV, 47).

¹⁰⁹ "[P]erché la colpa era fatta contra a me, che so' infinita bontà" (*Il Dialogo*, XIV, 47).

¹¹⁰ "[S]i come la misericordia t'è propria, così la giustizia, la quale giustizia tua permane in eterno; unde, perché la tua giustizia non lassa veruno male impunito, sì come neuno bene inremunerato, non si poteva salvare perché non poteva soddisfare a te della colpa sua" (*Oratio* XI, 124). This prayer was made on the feast of the Annunciation, 1379. For another reference to sin as an offense to the infinite God, see Letter 71.

¹¹¹ "E così satisfeci alla mia giustizia e saziai la divina mia misericordia, la quale misericordia volse soddisfare la colpa de l'uomo e disporlo a quel bene per lo quale Io l'avevo creato" (*Il Dialogo*, XIV, 48).

finite nature, that is, of the mud of Adam, but through the power of the eternal Godhead, the infinite divine nature."¹¹²

For Catherine, as for Anselm and Thomas, the solution to the need for proper satisfaction is found in the two natures of Christ. Catherine describes the relation of these two natures as: "one nature with the other, soaked and kneaded."¹¹³ From their union at the Incarnation, these natures cannot be separated: "O Eternal Word, You united our mortal nature with Yourself in such a way that it was not possible that it might be separated in any way. So on the cross mortal nature suffered, but the divine nature gave life, and so You were at the same time happy and sorrowful. Not even in the tomb was one nature able to be separated from the other."¹¹⁴ Catherine is in accord with Thomas's teaching that neither Christ's body¹¹⁵ nor His human soul¹¹⁶ were separated from His Divinity in His death.

Catherine stresses the redemptive power of Jesus' divinity: "You disposed Yourself to give us the Word...so that...bearing that humanity, He might make satisfaction to Your justice not in virtue of the humanity but in virtue of the divinity united in it."¹¹⁷ Catherine asserts that Jesus' divinity is the more important element in the satisfaction: "The humanity endured the suffering of the cross, and in virtue of the Godhead He made satisfaction for our fault and we were restored to grace."¹¹⁸ So closely does Catherine perceive Jesus' divinity to be united with the Father that she affirms that in some sense His own divinity accepted the sacrifice

¹¹² "Si che la natura umana unita con la natura divina fu sufficiente a soddisfare per tutta l'umana generazione, non solo per la pena che sostenne nella natura finita, ciò è della massa d'Adam, ma per la virtù della deità eterna, natura divina infinita" (*Il Dialogo*, XIV, 48).

¹¹³ "[I]ntrisa e impastata l'una natura con l'altra" (*Il Dialogo*, LXXV, 194).

¹¹⁴ "O Verbo eterno, tu unisti in tal modo tecco la natura mortale che non fu possibile che per veruno modo si separasse; unde in croce la natura mortale sosteneva, ma la natura divina vivificava, e però insieme erri beato e doloroso, né anco nel sepolcro non si poté separare l'una natura da l'altra" (*Oratio XVI*, 188). This prayer was made on August 16, 1379, while Catherine was in Rome.

¹¹⁵ "Just as before his death Christ's flesh was personally and hypostatically united to the Word of God, it continued to be united to the Word after death" (S.T., III, 50, 2). "Et ideo sicut ante mortem caro Christi unita fuit secundum personam et hypostasim Verbo Dei, ita et remansit unita post mortem." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 54, trans. Richard T.A. Murphy, O.P. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1965), 120-121.

¹¹⁶ "Since then the Word was not separated at death from the body, much less was it separated from the soul" (S.T., III, 50, 3). "Cum ergo Verbum Dei non sit separatum in morte a corpore, multo minus separatum est ab anima." *Ibid.*, 124-125.

¹¹⁷ "[T]u disponesti di darci el Verbo...e che...sostenendo egli in essa umanità, fusse soddisfatto a la tua giusticia non in virtù de l'umanità ma in virtù della deità unita in essa" (*Oratio XI*, 124-126). For Catherine's opinion on the need for a divine nature to make satisfaction, see *Il Dialogo*, XXII.

¹¹⁸ "L'umanità sostenne la pena della croce; e in virtù della deità fu sodisfatto alla colpa nostra, e fummo restituiti a Grazia" (Letter 318, V, 51). Noffke suggests that this letter was written between January 15 and 31, 1379.

of His human nature: "The human nature endured the punishment and the divine nature, united with this human nature, accepted the sacrifice of My Son, which was offered to Me for you, in order to take away death from you and to give you life."¹¹⁹

For Catherine, as Jesus' sufferings satisfy God's justice, the extent of Jesus' suffering also manifests God's mercy:

Your mercy did not will that the immaculate lamb might buy back the human race only with a little drop of His blood, nor with the pain of one member only, but with the suffering and the blood of all of His body, that He might make satisfaction for the whole human race that had offended You. For we see that Your creatures offend You, some with their hands, some with their feet, some with the head, and some with the other members of the body. Just as the human race had offended You with all the members of the body, and also because every sin is committed with the will, since without the will there would not be sin, and that will contains the whole body, so the whole human body offends You. And so with the whole body and blood of Your Son, You wished to make satisfaction that He might fully make satisfaction for everything in virtue of the infinite divine nature united with Your human nature. Our humanity suffered the pain in the Word and the Godhead accepted the sacrifice. O eternal Word, Son of God, how did You have perfect contrition for sin since the poison of sin was not in You? I see, inestimable Love, that You wanted to make satisfaction bodily and spiritually, just as humanity had sinned and had offended and committed the sin bodily and spiritually.¹²⁰

Catherine, having incorporated Anselm's basic principles on satisfaction into her writings, does not thereby restrict her thought on the need for redemption. Rather, Anselm's principles act as a springboard for her own reflections, in which she emphasizes the salvific power of Jesus' obedience. In a similar way, she tries to fathom the Patristic explanations of the struggle with the devil. While Catherine draws

¹¹⁹ "La natura umana sostenesse la pena, e la natura divina unita con essa natura umana, accettasse il sacrificio del mio Figliuolo offerto a me per voi, per tollervi la morte e darvi la vita" (*Il Dialogo*, XXII, 62).

¹²⁰ "La tua misericordia non volse che l'agnello immacolato ricomprasse l'umana generazione solamente con una gocciola del sangue suo, né con pena d'uno membro solo, ma con pena e sangue di tutto el corpo suo, acciò che satisfacesse a tutta l'umana generazione che aveva offeso te; però che noi vediamo che le tue creature t'offendono chi con le mani, chi con piedi, chi col capo e chi con gli altri membri del corpo, si che l'umana generazione aveva offeso te con tutti e membri del corpo; e anco perché ogni colpa si commette con la volontà, ché senza essa volontà non sarebbe colpa, et essa volontà contiene tutto el corpo, unde tutto el corpo dell'uomo offende te. E però con tutto el corpo e sangue del tuo Figliuolo volesti soddisfare, acciò che a tutti fosse pienamente soddisfatto in virtù della natura divina infinita unita con la natura umana finita. L'umanità nostra sostenne la pena nel Verbo e la Deità accettò il sacrificio. O Verbo eterno, Figliuolo di Dio, e perché fu che tu avesti perfetta contrizione della colpa, con ciò sia cosa che in te non fu veleno di peccato? Vego, amore inestimabile, che tu volesti soddisfare corporalmente e mentalmente, si come l'uomo corporalmente e mentalmente aveva offeso e commessa la colpa" (*Oratio* XIX, 216-217). This prayer was given on Sexagesima Sunday, February 13, 1379.

deeply from the tradition available to her, her explanation for the Atonement demonstrates her own relational style and approach. She brings together strands from different sources but, by means of her own affectivity, imagery, and theological insight, she weaves those sources into a quilt that is decidedly her own.

Jesus' Obedience

The Scriptures emphasize Jesus' obedience to the Father as the cause of the redemption (Phil. 2:8; Rom. 5:19; Heb. 5:8). Jesus' sufferings were salvific because of Who He was and because His actions were a self-offering in submission to the will of the Father. Inspired by the Scriptures, Catherine asserts that Jesus' obedient submission to the will of the Father reversed the disobedience of Adam:

You know well that when the first man, Adam, fell through the disobedience of the sin, eternal death followed upon this sin. [God] wishing to restore him to grace and to give him eternal life, did this with the means of His only begotten Son, placing it on Him that He might kill our disobedience with obedience and that, by means of His death, He might restore life to us and He might consume and destroy our death.¹²¹

Catherine uses the symbol of a key to explain the role of obedience in the redemption: "Their first father...cast the key of obedience into the mud of impurity, crushing it with the hammer of pride, rusting it with selfish love. Not until the Word, My only-begotten Son, came was this key of obedience picked up and purified in the fire of divine charity. He drew it out of the mud, washing it with His blood, straightening it with the sword of justice, refashioning your wickedness upon the anvil of His body."¹²²

The key of obedience restores to humanity the possibility of sharing the Father's eternal life: "For it was unlocked with the key of obedience and with the disobedience of Adam it was locked.... I took the keys of obedience and placed them

¹²¹ "Sapete bene che essendo caduto l'uomo primo Adam per la disobediencia nella colpa, a la quale colpa seguitò la morte eternale, e volendolo restituire a gratia e darli vita eterna, elli el fece col mezzo dell'unigenito suo Figliuolo, ponendoli che con l'obediencia uccidesse la disobediencia nostra, e col mezzo della morte sua ci rendesse la vita, e consumasse e distruggesse la nostra morte" (Letter 71, I, 268). This letter was sent to Monna Bartolomea D'Andrea Mei. Noffke sets the date of this letter between late August and October 1377. For a reference to Christ's obedience to fulfill in humanity the truth of the Father, see Letter 259.

¹²² "[I] primo padre loro...gittò la chiave de l'obediencia nel loto della immondizia; schiacciandola col martello della superbia, arugginilla con l'amore proprio. Se non, poi che venne il Verbo unigenito mio Figliuolo, che si recò questa chiave de l'obediencia in mano e purificolla nel fuoco della divina carità, trassela del loto, lavandola col sangue suo, dirizzolla col coltello della giustizia, fabricando le iniquità vostre in su l'ancudine del corpo suo" (*Il Dialogo*, CLV, 527).

in the hands of the gentle and loving Word, My Truth. And as a gatekeeper He unlocked this gate of heaven."¹²³

By His obedience, Jesus makes the Father's intention in creation become a reality. Humanity is created to share God's eternal life. Through Jesus' obedience, the individual is aided by God's grace to cooperate with God's will in her or his life. While moral infirmity followed the disobedience of Adam, the assistance of God's grace becomes possible through Jesus: "As through disobedience we all contracted sin, so through the obedience of the Son of God we all have acquired grace."¹²⁴

Catherine grounds Jesus' obedience in His desire for the honor of the Father and for the salvation of humanity: "There we will find the fire of His inestimable charity and love, which made Him run to the shame of the cross, lifted on high, hungry and thirsting for the honor of the Father and for our salvation....There we see the obedience of Christ crucified Who, through obeying, dies, and offers this obedience with such desire, that the pain of desire is greater to Him than the pain of the body."¹²⁵

Jesus' Struggle with the Devil

Catherine draws upon Patristic symbolism of the redemption, by portraying the redemption as a contest between Christ and the devil.¹²⁶ According to this depiction, the devil had possession of humanity:

¹²³ "[P]erchè ella fu diserrata con la chiave de l'obediencia, e con la disobediencia di Adam si serrò...tolsi le chiavi de l'obbedienza e posile in mano del dolce e amoroso Verbo, mia Verità; e' come portonaio diserrò questa porta del cielo" (*Il Dialogo*, CLIV, 522). For a similar passage on Christ's obedience as it unlocks heaven, see *Il Dialogo*, CCXIII.

¹²⁴ "[E] come per la disobediencia contraemmo tutti peccato, così per l'obediencia del Figliuolo di Dio abbiamo tutti contratto la Grazia" (Letter 254, IV, 78). This letter was written between January 10 and 31, 1377. For a reference to Jesus' obedience as the cause of grace, see Letter 110.

¹²⁵ "Ine troveremo il fuoco della sua inestimabile carità e amore, il quale l'ha fatto correre infino agli obrobrii della croce, levato in alto, affamato, e assetato di sete dell'onore del Padre e della salute nostra.... Ine vediamo l'obediencia di Cristo crocifisso, che, per obedire, muore; e fa questa obediencia con tanto desiderio, che maggiore gli è la pena del desiderio, che la pena del corpo" (Letter 34, I, 128-129). Noffke suggests that this letter was written to the prior and monks of the Monte Oliveto monastery near Siena between April 1 and 20, 1378.

¹²⁶ Irenaeus depicts the redemption as a struggle with the devil: "For He fought and conquered; for He was man contending for the fathers...for He bound the strong man, and set free the weak, and endowed His own handiwork with salvation by destroying sin." Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III, xviii, 6, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, vol. I (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985), 447-448. Origen, writing against Celsus, describes Jesus' death as not only an example of death for devotion, but also "the first blow in the conflict which is to overthrow the power of that evil spirit, the devil, who had obtained dominion over the world." Origen, *Against Celsus*, 7, 17, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, vol. IV (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986), 617.

The eternal God has given us the Word, His Son, that He might pay for us the debt, to which we were obligated, and that He might draw us out from the dark prison and servitude of the devil, out of which humanity was not able to come. And this divine Word, becoming a mortal man, entered the field of battle for us, and He, defeating the devil, broke the dark prison and drew us out from the miserable servitude, in which for so long the entire human race had remained. And with the Cross He opened to us the door of eternal life. And all this was done through love.¹²⁷

In consenting to sin, humanity allowed itself to be held by the devil. Catherine depicts this bondage as a written contract which Jesus destroys:

Since God saw that humanity had lost its dignity through the sin which was committed and so was obligated to the devil, most high eternal Goodness, having fallen in love with His creature, came. He wished to restore it and to take away the debt. He sent the Word, His only begotten Son, sentencing Him to death to restore the life of grace for humanity, sending Him to call back and to draw humanity from the prison of sin and from the hands of the devil. "O gentle loving Word, Son of God, gentlest inestimable charity, You interposed Yourself, recaller and payer. You have ripped up the paper of debt between the devil and humanity, which, on account of sin, was obligated to him, so that ripping up the paper of Your body, You released us."¹²⁸

As in some of the Patristic imagery, Catherine describes Jesus' struggle with the devil as an athletic contest. Jesus is the knight who wrestles sin and death: "O gentle and loving knight, You did not consider either Your death or Your life or Your shame, even wrestling arm to arm with the death of sin, and death conquered

¹²⁷ "Dio eterno, ha donato a noi el Verbo del Figliuolo suo, perchè pagasse per noi il debito al quale eravamo obbligati, e traesseci dell'oscura prigione e servitudine del dimonio, della quale non poteva l'uomo uscirne. Ed esso Verbo divino, diventando uomo mortale, entrò al campo della battaglia per noi; e, sconfiggendo el dimonio, ruppe l'oscura prigione, e trasseci della misera servitù, nella quale tanto tempo era stata tutta l'umana generazione; e con la Croce aperse a noi la porta di vita eterna. E tutto questo ha fatto per amore" (Letter 248, IV, 59). The letter was sent to Bartolo and Orsa Usimbardi as well as Francesco and Agnesa di Pipino. Noffke suggests that the dating is between October 10 and 20, 1378. Catherine makes a similar reference to Christ releasing humanity from prison in Letter 69.

¹²⁸ "Che vedendo Dio che l'uomo aveva perduta la sua dignità per lo peccato commesso ed erasi ubligato al dimonio, venne la somma eterna bontà essendo innamorato della sua creatura, vuole ristituire e trarla d'obbligo: manda el verbo dell'unigenito suo Figliuolo, condannato alla morte per rendere la vita della gratia all'uomo: mandalo per ricolta dell'uomo a trarlo della carcere del peccato e dalle mani delle dimonia. O dolce amoroso verbo Figliuolo di Dio, inestimabile carità dolcissima, tu se' intrato ricolta e pagatore, tu ài stracciata la carta dell'ubligazione fra l'uomo e 'l dimonio, che per lo peccato era ubligato a lui, sì che stracciando la carta del corpo tuo, sciogliesti noi" (Letter 21, I, 65-66). The name of the recipient of Letter 21 is not given, probably on account of the personal sins that Catherine addresses. Noffke remarks that the language of this letter gives the impression that Catherine is writing to a person who has been involved in homosexual behavior. She sets this letter between February and April 1376, and possibly in Holy Week, April 6-11, 1376.

the life of Your body, and Your death destroyed our death."¹²⁹ The struggle with the devil becomes, for Catherine, not only wrestling but jousting. On the cross, Jesus jousts with the devil: "O sweet game and joust which He has made!"¹³⁰

Since sin frustrated the Father's purpose in creation, the sharing of eternal life, Jesus' struggle is not only with sin but also death, the effect of sin. This contest is the fundamental struggle between life and death. Catherine, consciously or unconsciously, echoes the *Vexilla Regis* of Venantius Fortunatus (d. 600): "Life suffered death and by that death gave life back."¹³¹

Catherine uses another Patristic image, one in which Jesus catches the devil on a hook.¹³² According to this figure the devil is lured by Jesus' humanity: "The devil and his malice is defeated with His wisdom, taking him with the bait and hook of our humanity by the union of the divine nature with the human nature."¹³³ Catherine identifies Jesus' divinity as the hook which snags the devil: "And You manifested to us Your wisdom, for with the bait of our humanity, with which you hid

¹²⁹ "O dolce e amoroso cavaliere, tu non raguardi nè a tua morte nè a tua vita nè a tuo vitoperio, anco giuochi in sulla croce alle braccia colla morte del peccato, e la morte vince la vita del corpo tuo, e la tua morte distrusse la morte nostra" (Letter 204, III, 198). Noffke dates this letter to Frate Bartolomeo Dominici in Lent, 1376, between February 26 and April 12. For another reference to the struggle between death and life as a tournament, see Letter 196.

¹³⁰ "Odi dolce gioco e torniello ch' egli ha fatto!" (Letter 256, IV, 90). This letter was addressed to Niccolò dei Strozzi, Prior of the Pisan Knights Hospitallers. Noffke proposes that this was sent between March and early April 1377.

¹³¹ "Qui vita mortem pertulit et morte vitam reddidit" Venantius Fortunatus, "Vexilla Regis," in *Hymns of the Roman Liturgy*, ed. Joseph Connelly (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1954), 82. It is likely that Catherine knew this hymn from its use at Vespers during Passiontide.

¹³² This theme was quite widely used by the Fathers. Gregory of Nyssa (d. 395), in his first "Oration on the Resurrection of Christ," depicts the devil swallowing the bait of Jesus' humanity and being caught by the hook of the Godhead. See PG XLVI, 607. Ambrose (d. 397), in his *Expositio in Lucam*, describes Christ's body as the bait to catch the devil. See PL XV, 1616. Gregory the Great (d. 604), in his *Magna Moralia*, his commentary on the book of Job, pictures the devil as the monster Leviathan who was drawn by the bait of the flesh and then caught with the hook of divinity. See PL XXXIII, 680. John Damascene (d. 749), in his work, the *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, makes the interesting observation that the devil tried to tempt humanity with the bait of deification but was caught with the bait of flesh. See PG XCIV, 981-982. He also makes the comparison of the bait of Christ's body and the hook of the Godhead. See PG XCIV, 1096-1097. Catherine may have been aware of the image through the writings of Gregory the Great or through the preaching she heard.

¹³³ "El dimonio à sconfitto, e la sua malitia, con la sua sapientia, pigliandolo coll'esca e amo della nostra umanità, per l'unione della natura divina con la natura umana" (Letter 257, IV, 92). This letter was sent to Conte di Monna Agnola and his companions, who were young men in Florence apparently interested in joining a crusade. Noffke sets this letter between March and April 1377. For another reference to Christ's humanity as a hook, see Letter 221.

the hook of the divinity, You caught the devil and took from him the mastery that he had over us."¹³⁴

Catherine also ponders Jesus' struggle with the devil by reflecting on Jesus' humility in becoming a servant. Just as humanity had been enslaved by sin, so, Jesus, to release humanity from sin, becomes a slave: "Making Himself a servant He has made you free and drawn you from the slavery of the devil."¹³⁵ Catherine contrasts the destruction caused by the devil's lies with the redemption brought by Jesus, Who is Truth: "Indeed with truth He confounds and destroys the lie of the devil that he had told Eve. That lie broke up the road to heaven, and the Truth has repaired it and walled it up with blood."¹³⁶

To demonstrate Jesus' humility and vulnerability, Catherine imagines Jesus catching both humanity and the devil not with force but with a song: "And with His humanity united with His Godhead, making a gentle sound upon the cross, He caught the child of the human race. He caught the devil because He took away his mastery, that he had possessed for such a long time through their sin."¹³⁷

Catherine takes the power of the devil over humanity very seriously. For her, Jesus' Passion really is the confrontation of Incarnate Good and incarnate evil, life and death. She draws upon images from the Fathers of the early Church, which she heard in preaching, to explain this struggle and uses these images in innovative ways that illustrate the vulnerability Jesus assumed in order to overcome the force of evil.

The Love of God Manifested in Jesus' Death

Catherine's understanding of the Atonement finds its foundation in the explanations of Anselm and Thomas as well as those of the Scriptures and the Fathers. Thus with Anselm and Thomas, she accepts the necessity of justice in the Atonement, the requirement of punishment, and the inability of humanity to satisfy an offense against the infinite God. With the Scriptures, she emphasizes the fundamental role of Jesus' obedience in atoning for the sin of humanity. She draws upon the

¹³⁴ "[E] manifestastici la sapiencia tua, che con l'esca della nostra umanità, con la quale cupristi el lamo della deità, pigliasti el dimonio e tollesteli la signoria che egli aveva sopra di noi" (*Oratio* IV, 40). For references to Christ's divinity and humanity as hooks, see *Il Dialogo*, CXXXV and *Oratio* XII.

¹³⁵ "[E]ssendosi fatto servo v'à fatti liberi e tratti della servitudine del dimonio" (*Il Dialogo*, CLI, 510).

¹³⁶ "[A]nco con la verità confuse e distrusse la bugia del dimonio, la quale egli disse ad Eva. La quale bugia ruppe la strada del cielo, e la Verità l'à racconcia e murata col sangue" (*Il Dialogo*, XXVII, 74).

¹³⁷ "E con questa umanità unita con la Deità, facendo uno dolce suono in su la croce, prese il figliuolo de l'umana generazione; prese il dimonio, ché ne gli tolse la signoria, che tanto tempo l'aveva posseduto per la colpa sua" (*Il Dialogo*, CXLVII, 491).

Patristic imagery, in which Jesus struggles with the devil to regain captured humanity, through the payment of ransom, through a physical and spiritual struggle of endurance, or through luring the devil with the bait of Jesus' humanity. Yet while incorporating these explanations and images into her own understanding, Catherine gives more emphasis to the motive of Jesus' self-sacrifice, which, for her, is to fulfill the truth of the Father.

Catherine conceives of Jesus as "truth." In her letters, she often speaks of Jesus as "Gentle First Truth."¹³⁸ In *Il Dialogo*, the Father speaks of Jesus as "My Truth."¹³⁹ Jesus' salvific actions are seen by Catherine as the triumph of truth over falsehood, as when she writes: "Indeed with truth He confounded and destroyed the lie of the devil."¹⁴⁰

Catherine frequently reflects on the need for Jesus to fulfill the truth of the Father: "You saw then, eternal Father, the suffering which was taken by Your Son to restore the human race to grace and to fulfill Your truth in us."¹⁴¹ This truth is the Father's love, especially with regard to the Father's intention in creating humanity to share His eternal life. Catherine interprets all of God's actions with regard to humanity in terms of the truth of the Father:

So for love, then, God created us in His image and likeness. And for love He gave us His Son in order that He might bring us back. Recreating us to grace in His blood, God wished by means of the Son to show us His truth, and His gentle will, which does not seek nor want other than our sanctification. His truth was this, that in truth He had created humanity that we might share in and rejoice in His eternal vision, where the soul receives its happiness. So through the sin committed by Adam this truth was not fulfilled in humanity. God, wishing then to fulfill this truth, Himself constrains us with His charity. And He gives us this which is most dear, that is, His only-begotten Son. And He sets this obedience on Him which restores humanity and by it He turns death to life.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ "la prima dolce Verità." For other examples, see Letters 3, 7, 8 and 16.

¹³⁹ "la mia Verità." See *Il Dialogo*, XXIX, XXXIV, XXXV, LVIII, LXII, LXIII, LXXXVI.

¹⁴⁰ "[A]nco con la verità confuse e distrusse la bugia del dimonio" (*Il Dialogo*, XXVII, 74).

¹⁴¹ "Vedesti ancora, Padre eterno, la pena che seguitava al tuo Figliuolo per restituire l'umana generazione a gracia e per adempire la verità tua in noi" (*Oratio* IV, 44). For another reference to God foreseeing the remedy, refer to *Oratio* VII.

¹⁴² "Sicchè per amore, dunque, Dio ci creò all'immagine e similitudine sua, e per amore ci donò il suo Figliuolo, acciocchè ci restituisse; ricreandoci a Grazia nel sangue suo, volle Dio col mezzo del Figliuolo mostrare a noi la sua verità, e la dolce volontà sua, che non cerca nè vuole altro che la nostra santificazione. La sua verità era questa, che in verità aveva creato l'uomo, però che partecipasse e godesse nell'eterna sua visione, dove l'anima riceve la beatitudine sua. Onde per lo peccato commesso da Adam non si adempiva questa verità nell'uomo. Volendo Dio adunque adempire questa verità, esso medesimo ci costringe con la sua carità, e donaci quella cosa ch'egli ha più cara, cioè il figliuolo unigenito; e pongli questa obediencia, che egli restituisca l'uomo, e dalla morte torni alla vita" (Letter 259, IV, 101-102). Noffke suggests that this letter to Tommaso d'Alviano was

On occasion, when Catherine stresses that the redemption was necessary to purge the fault, she makes use of Anselm's explanation. More frequently, she perceives sin as a frustration of the Father's truth in creation. The blood enables humanity to attain its purpose, eternal life. Thus, she writes:

He mirrored Himself in the will of the Eternal Father, whose will for our salvation wished to manifest His eternal truth. This truth was that He had created us to give us eternal life in order that we might enjoy the supreme eternal Good. This truth was not fulfilled in us because of the fault that was committed. So, it was necessary, to fulfill it, that the fault be purged. And so God willed to purge the fault together with fulfilling His will in humanity. And this same truth compelled the Eternal Father so that, for the ineffable love which He had for us and for His truth, He gave us the truth of the Word, His Son, and clothed Him with our humanity, in order that in Him with endurance He might make satisfaction for our sins, and so He might fulfill His truth in us. So, the gentle Word, the Son of God, receiving the great obedience of the Father, ran, as one fallen in love, to the shameful death of the most holy cross, and fulfilling what was asked in obedience, He fulfilled the truth, that is, that we were restored to grace on His part, although on our part we may resist with our misery and faults.¹⁴³

For Catherine, God's generosity in giving Jesus manifests His intentions. Jesus is the proof that God desires to share eternal life with humanity: "Certainly we see it manifestly, that if in truth He had not created us to give us eternal life, that we might enjoy His supreme and eternal good, He would not have given us such a Redeemer, nor given Himself, that is, Himself, wholly God and wholly human. Then certainly it is the truth that the blood of Christ shows us and makes clear this truth of His sweet will."¹⁴⁴

written between October 20 and December 31, 1377. For Catherine's prayer on the blood as manifesting the truth of God's intention in creation, see Letter 195.

¹⁴³ "[S]i specolò nella volontà del Padre eterno, la quale volontà per nostra santificazione voleva manifestare la sua eterna verità. La quale verità fu questa: che egli aveva creato l'uomo per dargli vita eterna, acciò che godesse il sommo eterno Bene; e per la colpa commessa non si compiva questa verità in noi: onde era bisogno che, per compirla la colpa si purgasse. E però Dio volle insieme purgare la colpa e compire la sua verità nell'uomo: e perciò questa verità detta costrinse il Padre eterno, e per l'amore ineffabile, ch' egli ebbe a noi, e alla verità sua, ci donò la verità del Verbo del suo Figliuolo, e vestillo della nostra umanità, acciò che in essa col sostenere, fosse soddisfatto alle nostre colpe, e così si compisse la sua verità in noi. Onde, ricevendo il Verbo dolce del Figliuolo di Dio la grande obediencia del Padre, corse, come innamorato, all'obbrobriosa morte della santissima croce; e compiendo l'obediencia, compì la verità: cioè, che fummo restituiti a Grazia quanto è dalla parte sua, se noi dalla nostra non ricalcitriamo colle miserie e difetti nostri" (Letter 354, V, 205). Catherine wrote this letter to Madonna Pentella in Naples between August 15-31, 1379. Madonna Pentella lived in a difficult marriage, as her husband kept a female slave as his mistress.

¹⁴⁴ "Bene lo vediamo manifestamente: che se in verità non ci avesse creati per darci vita eterna, perchè godessimo el suo sommo e infinito bene, non ci avrebbe dato siffatto Ricomperatore, nè dato sè medesimo, cioè tutto sè Dio e tutto uomo. Adunque bene è la verità che 'l sangue di Cristo ci

God's determination to fulfill His truth is demonstrated not only in the historical redemption but in the process of an individual's salvation:

The blood shows His sweet will, which does not seek nor wish other than our sanctification. And that which He gives and permits, is given to us for this end, is given for love, in order that we be sanctified in Him. So His truth is fulfilled. His truth is this, that He created us for the glory and praise of His name and in order that we might participate in His bliss and His incalculable charity, which one perfectly tastes and receives in the vision of God.¹⁴⁵

God's motive in desiring to share eternal life is His love for those He has created. This emphasis on God's love for humanity as a motive of the Passion is certainly present in the tradition which Catherine inherited, and is particularly clear in Thomas. The first reason Thomas gives for the fittingness of the Passion is the revelation of God's love: "Man could thus see how much God loved him, and so would be aroused to love Him. In this the perfection of his salvation consists."¹⁴⁶ Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., observes Catherine's accord with this passage of Thomas: "The entire Catherinian doctrine is a commentary on these words."¹⁴⁷

While this emphasis on God love is not absent from the tradition, it dominates Catherine's writings on salvation. Catherine connects God's love with His purpose in creating humanity and views the Passion as a necessary way of fulfilling that truth. Even when she incorporates other traditional explanations and images, Catherine's attention is on God's loving motives. When her vocabulary makes references to humanity's war with God, the punishment on the body of Jesus, and the satisfaction of the offense, she reflects Anselm but almost always she indicates explicitly that God's motive is love. Thus, she prays:

manifesta e fa chiari d'essa verità della dolce volontà sua" (Letter 227, III, 302-303). Noffke dates this letter to William Flete between May 3 and 15, 1378. Catherine would have been in Florence at the time. For another example of the theme of God's truth underlying creation and redemption, see Letter 102.

¹⁴⁵ "Perchè il sangue manifesta la dolce sua volontà, che non cerca nè vuole altro che la nostra santificazione; e ciò che dà e permette, è dato a noi per questo fine; per amore è dato, acciocchè siamo santificati in lui. Così s'adempie la sua verità. La sua verità è questa: che ci creò per gloria e loda del nome suo, e perchè noi partecipassimo della sua beatitudine e la sua inestimabile carità, la quale perfettamente si gusta e riceve nella visione di Dio" (Letter 124, II, 216). Noffke dates this letter between late November and December 1377. This letter was sent to Misser Matteo di Cenni Fazi, the rector of Siena's second largest hospital, the *Casa della Misericordia* Hospital.

¹⁴⁶ "Primo enim per hoc homo cognoscit quantum Deus hominem diligit, et per hoc provocatur ad eum diligendum, in quo perfectio humanae salutis consistit." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 46, 3, vol. 54, trans. Richard T.A. Murphy, O.P. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1965), 12-13.

¹⁴⁷ "La dottrina catheriniana è tutta un commento a queste parole." Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., "Il misterio di Cristo nella verità del Padre," *Angelicum* 64 (1987): 196, n. 5.

O Eternal Godhead, I see in You inestimable love. After we fell into the ugliness of sin through our misery and weakness, disobeying You, our first Father, I see that love constrained You, the high and eternal Father, to open the eye of Your compassion to us poor miserable ones. So You sent the Word, Your only-begotten Son, the Word, the Word Incarnate, veiled with our poor flesh and clothed with our mortality. And You, Jesus Christ, our reconciler, and reformer and our redeemer, You made Yourself the mediator, the word of love, and of the great war that humanity had with God, You made the great peace. You have punished our wickedness and the disobedience of Adam upon Your body, being obedient even to the shameful death of the cross. Upon the cross, gentle love, Jesus, You cast a blow that made satisfaction at the same time for the offense to Your Father and for our sin, vindicating the offense to the Father upon Yourself.¹⁴⁸

Not only is love always God's reason for acting, but humanity, which has been made in God's image, is best drawn by love. The crucifixion is not only an act of atonement to the Father but it is an action through which God appeals to humanity: "My goodness seeing that in another way you would not be able to be drawn....-drew everything to Himself in this way to show the inexpressible love that He had for you because the human heart is always drawn by love."¹⁴⁹

While Jesus' sufferings fulfill the requirements of justice, His motive is both the honor of the Father and His intense love for humanity. Consequently, His desire for humanity surpasses His sufferings: "And He suffered not only the pain of the cross in His body, but the crucified desire in the mind."¹⁵⁰ The sufferings which Jesus endured in His desire for humanity caused Him more pain than did the crucifixion of His body. As great as Jesus' finite sufferings were, they do not compare with His infinite desires for humanity:

It does not seem that this immaculate Lamb is able to be satisfied. He cries out on the cross, saturated with shame, and He says that He thirsts. Although He might

¹⁴⁸ "O deità eterna, io veggo in te, amore inestimabile, che poi che per la nostra miseria e fragilità cademmo nella bruttura del peccato, disobediendo a te il nostro primo padre, te, alto eterno Padre, l'amore vego che ti constringe a uprire l'occhio della tua pietà a noi miseri miserabili, unde mandasti el verbo de l'unigenito tuo Figliuolo, verbo, parola incarnata, velato della misera nostra carne e vestito della nostra mortalità. E tu Iesu Cristo, reconciliatore e riformatore e redentore nostro, se' fatto tramezzatore, verbo amore, e della grande guerra che l'uomo aveva con Dio hai fatta la grande pace, hai punite le nostre iniquità e la disobediencia di Adam sopra el corpo tuo, essendo obediante infino a l'obrobriosa morte della croce. In su la croce, amore dolce Iesu, gittasi un colpo che sodisfece insiementemente alla ingiuria del Padre tuo e alla colpa nostra vendicando la ingiuria del Padre sopra te medesimo" (*Oratio* I, 8-10).

¹⁴⁹ "Vedendo la mia bontà che in altro modo non potevate essere tratti...trasse ogni cosa a sè per questo modo, per dimostrare l'amore ineffabile che v'aveva, perchè il cuore de l'uomo è sempre tratto per amore" (*Il Dialogo*, XXVI, 71). For Catherine's prayer on the generosity of God in giving His Son, see *Oratio* VIII.

¹⁵⁰ "E sostenne non solamente la pena della croce nel corpo, ma el crociato desiderio nella mente" (*Oratio* XVI, 188).

have had bodily thirst, the thirst of holy desire that He had for the salvation of souls was greater. O inestimable sweetest Love, it does not seem that giving Yourself to such torments, You give enough, for the desire You had for the salvation of souls was even greater, wanting all the more to give everything. Love is the reason. I do not marvel at it because Your love was infinite, and the suffering was finite. And so the cross of His desire was greater, than the cross of His body.¹⁵¹

All of humanity is encompassed by Jesus' love in His redemptive sufferings. Catherine describes this universal love that motivates Jesus' suffering as fire: "He did not justify one half of the world, but the whole human race, past, present, and future. He has not ministered blood to you without ministering and giving you fire. For through the fire of love He has given it to you. Neither the fire nor the blood are without My divine nature because the divine nature is perfectly united in the human nature."¹⁵²

Jesus' death on the cross demonstrates the Son of God's willingness not only to be humbled to humanity but even to endure suffering and death for the sake of love. In the cross the love that God has always had for humanity becomes supremely visible:

But, as I see, the soul came to perfect knowledge of the affection of Your charity, in Your light, in the passion of this Word, because then the fire hidden under our ashes began to be manifest generously and fully, opening His most holy body upon the wood of the cross. And in order that the affection of the soul might be drawn to exalted things, and the eye of the understanding might gaze into the fire, You, eternal Word, have wished to be raised on high from where You have showed the love in Your blood. In Your blood, You have showed Your mercy and generosity.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ "Non pare che questo Agnello immacolato si possa saziare; grida in croce satollato da obbrobri, e dice che ha sete. Poniamochè corporalmente esso avesse sete, ma maggiore era la sete del santo desiderio che egli aveva della salute dell'anime. O inestimabile dolcissima Carità, e non pare che tu dia tanto, dandoti a tanti tormenti, che non rimanga maggiore il desiderio che egli aveva della salute dell'anime di più voler dare tutto. N' è cagion l'amore. Non me ne maraviglio: chè l'amore tuo era infinito, e la pena era finita. E però gli era maggiore la croce del desiderio, che la croce del corpo" (Letter 16, I, 51-52). Catherine's scribes left the heading "Ad un gran Prelato" on this letter but otherwise the identity of the recipient is unknown. Noffke suggests a date between February to April 1376, but probably near Holy Week, April 6-12. For Catherine's opinion that Jesus chose the most shameful death possible, see Letter 14.

¹⁵² "Non ci capie una metà del mondo, ma tutta l'umana generazione: e passati e presenti e futuri. Non v'è ministrato sangue che non v'abbi ministrato e dato fuoco, perché per fuoco d'amore egli ve l'à dato; né fuoco né sangue senza la natura mia divina, perché perfettamente si unì la natura divina nella natura umana" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXVII, 377). For another reference to Jesus' obedience as a manifestation of His love, see Letter 272.

¹⁵³ "Ma, come io veggo, l'anima venne a perfetta cognizione de l'affetto de la carità tua, in el lume tuo, in la passione di questo Verbo, perché allora il fuoco ascoso sotto la cenere nostra cominciò (a) manifestarsi largamente e pienamente, aprendo il suo corpo santissimo sul legno della croce. E acciò che l'affetto dell'anima fosse tratto alle cose alte, e l'occhio de l'intelletto speculasse nel fuoco, tu

Catherine is overwhelmed by Jesus' willingness to suffer. Certainly, Jesus accepted suffering in obedience to the will of the Father, but His willingness to suffer went beyond passive acceptance. As Son of God, Jesus would not have remained on the cross unless He desired His sufferings. Jesus stayed on the cross on account of His deliberate choice. That choice was motivated by His love for humanity: "You and the other reasoning creatures were that rock which held Me, that is, the love which I had for you. For no other thing was sufficient to hold Me, God and Man."¹⁵⁴

For Catherine, Jesus' love is most remarkable because it is completely gratuitous and does not cease when it is rejected: "You will see the Word, the slain lamb, who gave Himself to you in food and in the ransom price, moved only by the fire of His charity, not for service which He might receive from humanity, because He received nothing but insult."¹⁵⁵

Catherine repeatedly reflects on Jesus' inexplicable love for humanity. Since His gratuitous love seems irrational, she compares Him to one who is inebriated: "You showed this burning desire and You ran as one drunk and blind to the shame of the cross. As someone blind does not see and as someone drunk when he is well intoxicated, almost like one who is dead, loses himself... You have let Yourself be blinded by love such that You did not let Yourself see our wickedness, nor have You lost this sentiment, sweet Lord!"¹⁵⁶

Since His generous love defies good sense, Catherine often uses the Italian word for "crazy," *pazzo*, to describe God's love: "You, abyss of charity, it seems that You are crazy about Your creatures, as if You would not be able to live without them,

Verbo eterno hai voluto essere levato in alto unde ne hai mostrato nel tuo sangue l'amore: nel tuo sangue ne hai mostrata la misericordia e la larghezza tua" (*Oratio* XII, 140). This prayer was given on Passion Sunday, March 27, 1379.

¹⁵⁴ [T]u e l'altre creature che anno in sè ragione, fusti quella pietra che mi tenesti, cioè l'amore che io ebbi a voi. Chè veruna altra cosa era sufficiente a tenermi, Dio e Uomo" (Letter 223, III, 284). Noffke is of the opinion that this letter to Cardinal Iacomo Orsini was sent in April 1376, probably shortly after Easter, April 13. For another reference to Jesus' willing the nails and the cross, see Letter 95 and Letter 142.

¹⁵⁵ "[V]edrai el Verbo, agnello svenato, che ti s'è dato in cibo e in prezzo, mosso solo dal fuoco della sua carità, non per servitio che avesse ricevuto dall'uomo, chè non aveva avuto altro che offesa" (Letter 164, III, 37). This letter was sent to Monna Melina, wife of Bartolomeo Barbari of Lucca. Catherine had stayed with them during her time in Lucca. Noffke sets this letter between mid-February to March 1376. For another reference to love as the bond that held Jesus on the cross, see Letter 253.

¹⁵⁶ "Tu dimostrasti questo affocato desiderio e corristi come ebbro e cieco all'obrobio della croce. Come el cieco non vede e l'ebbro quando è bene avinazzato, così elli quasi come morto perdetto sè medesimo.... Tu t'ài lassato acecare all'amore, che non ti lassa vedere le nostre iniquità; n' ài perduto el sentimento, signore dolce!" (Letter 225, III, 291). This letter was written to the Franciscan friar, Frate Lazzarino da Pisa. Noffke thinks that the letter was written after April 1, 1375, and very likely after Pentecost, June 10.

although You are our God who has no need of us....What moved You to give such mercy? Love, and not an obligation nor need that You have of us because we are guilty and wicked debtors."¹⁵⁷ She recalls words that may have been spoken to her in a vision of Christ crucified: "Look at Me, the Lamb, bleeding on the cross for you, totally, from head to feet, I did not utter My cry expressing complaint. Nor did I look at your ignorance nor did your ingratitude draw Me back from working your salvation as one crazy and transformed through the hunger that I have for you."¹⁵⁸ Jesus' desire for humanity so surpasses the human experience of love that Catherine equates it with inebriation, madness, and an overwhelming hunger.

Since tradition has appropriated love especially to the Holy Spirit, Catherine relates the close relationship of the Holy Spirit with Jesus' self-giving: "We see the clemency and the abundance of the Holy Spirit, that is, that ineffable love which held Him fixed on the wood of the most holy cross, that neither the nails nor the rope could have been able to hold Him bound if the bond of charity had not been."¹⁵⁹ In this and similar passages, Catherine uses the word *clemenzia*, which she associates with the Holy Spirit. Kenelm Foster comments: "*Clementia* in Thomistic theology denotes a virtue in man rather than an attribute of God (II, II, 157). In St. Catherine's writings it is generally used rather than the more usual 'love' for the divine attribute appropriated...to the Holy Spirit."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ "Tu, abisso di carità, pare che impazzi delle tue creature, come se tu senza loro non potessi vivere, con ciò sia cosa che tu sia lo Idio nostro che non à bisogno di noi.... Chi ti muove a fare tanta misericordia? L'amore, e non debito né bisogno che tu abbi di noi, però che noi siamo rei e malvagi debitori" (*Il Dialogo*, XXV, 67-68).

¹⁵⁸ "Si riguarda me, agnello svenato in croce per te: tutto verso da capo a pie'; non è udito el grido mio per mormorazione. Non riguardo la tua ignorantia, né la tua ingratitude mi ritrae che, come pazzo e trasformato per fame che io ò di te, io non aduopari la tua salute" (Letter 70, I, 266). The inscription of the letter indicates that this was written to Frate Bartolomeo Dominici when he was "Baccelliere" in Pisa. Noffke dates this letter in April or May of 1374. For another reference to God's love as madness, see Letter 369.

¹⁵⁹ "Vedesi la clemenzia e l'abbondanzia dello Spirito Santo; cioè quello amore ineffabile che 'l tenne confitto in sul legno della santissima croce, che nè chiovi nè fune l'averebbe potuto tenere legato se il legame della carità non fusse" (Letter 34, I, 129). This letter was sent to the prior of the monks of Monte Oliveto near Siena. Noffke dates it between April 1 and 20, 1378. For another reference to the Spirit's role, see Letter 129.

¹⁶⁰ Kenelm Foster, O.P., "St. Catherine's Teaching on Christ," *Life of the Spirit* 16 (1962): 316. Sr. Mary Jeremiah, O.P., calls attention to the distinction between Catherine's uses of *misericordia* and *clemenzia*. She writes: "*Misericordia*, mercy, emphasizes the misery or suffering of another which moves one to compassion and indulgence towards the one in need. *Clemenzia*, clemency, is a disposition of the soul independent of others, that is, it exists before there is even the need of a response to a specific situation. It is a tenderness, a gentleness of soul, an openness to the needs or desires of another independent of the other's worthiness or lack of such. Catherine, almost without exception, uses 'mercy' when speaking of the saving action of the Father and the Son in regard to

Catherine's Jesus is not a passive victim whose endurance of the punishment of intolerable sufferings makes satisfaction to the angry Father. For Catherine, Jesus is *innamorato*, "enamored" or "fallen in love," with humanity. Jesus does not accept the cross with resignation. He runs to it! She writes: "In order that we would be sanctified in him, He ran as one fallen in love to the shameful death of the cross, taking death with bitter torments to free us from eternal death."¹⁶¹ Catherine frequently repeats this theme of Jesus' eagerness: "His Son, with great humility and patience, ran even to the shameful death of the Cross for us."¹⁶² This eagerness of Jesus to embrace self-abasement reveals the extraordinary generosity of God: "And what greater lowliness are you able to see or ever find, so as to see God humiliated to humanity? God and Man ran to the shameful death of the cross."¹⁶³

Does Catherine's opinion that Jesus was eager to die distort the data of Scripture? In her conversations with Raimondo, Catherine's insisted that Jesus' words in the Garden of Olives, "Father, remove this chalice from Me" (Mk. 14:36), express Jesus' desire that the delay in His death be taken away, despite Raimondo's insistence that this was not the ordinary explanation of this passage.¹⁶⁴ Catherine's unusual interpretation has some precedent in the tradition. Origen interprets the passage as Jesus requesting not "this" cup but another harder one that would benefit more people.¹⁶⁵

While Catherine's suggestion may risk minimizing Jesus' human reactions, her emphasis on Jesus' active acceptance of His Passion has a foundation in the Gospels. Luke attests that Jesus entered Jerusalem by a resolute decision: "When the time came for Him to be taken up, He set His face towards Jerusalem" (Lk. 9:51).

humanity.... Catherine attributes mercy to the Father and Son, while clemency is reserved exclusively to the Person of the Holy Spirit." Sr. Mary Jeremiah, O.P., *The Secret of the Heart* (Fort Royal, VA: Christendom Press, 1995), 116-118.

¹⁶¹ "[P]erocchè, acciò che fussimo santificati in lui, corse come innamorato alla obbrobriosa morte della croce, sostenendo morte con amari tormenti per liberare noi dalla morte eternal" (Letter 116, II, 181-182). Noffke suggests a time between October and December 1377 as a possible date for this letter to Monna Pantasilea.

¹⁶² "[I] Figliuolo suo con grande umiltà e pazienza è corso infino all'obbrobriosa morte della Croce per noi." (Letter 90, II, 83). This letter was sent to Madonna Laudomia, wife of an important business person and political leader in Florence. Noffke suggests a date between August 20 and October 31, 1378, as the time of this letter.

¹⁶³ "E che maggiore bassezza si può vedere o si trova mai, che vedere Dio umiliato all'uomo? E Dio e Uomo corso all'obbrobriosa morte della croce?" (Letter 112, II, 164). This letter was sent to Countess Bandeçça Salimbeni. Noffke dates this letter near April 1377. For another reference to Jesus' running to the cross, see *Oratio X*.

¹⁶⁴ Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, II, ccix, 914.

¹⁶⁵ Origen, "An Exhortation to Martyrdom," in *Origen*, trans. by Rowan A. Greer (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 61.

Jesus does not turn away from Jerusalem, even though He is aware that His death is imminent (Mt. 26:1, Mk. 14:21). John stresses Jesus' deliberate choice: "No one takes My life from Me but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up" (Jn. 10:18). The Letter to the Hebrews associates joy with the Passion: "Looking to Jesus...who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2).

Catherine believes that Jesus' words to the apostles, "With desire, I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Lk. 22:15), express His desire to give Himself for humanity. She asserts: "Seeing that the time was almost completed, (He saw in the end that He must be sacrificed in His body to the Father for us), He rejoices and exults, and with great joy, He says, 'With desire I have desired.' This was the Passover which He spoke of, namely, of His giving of Himself in food, and for obedience to the Father to make a sacrifice of His body."¹⁶⁶

For Catherine, Jesus' desire to give His life is the assurance of God's desire for our sanctification: "We will say and we will judge that You are our gentle God who wants nothing but our sanctification. This is openly manifested to us in the blood of Your Son, who for our salvation ran as one in love to the shameful death of the most holy cross."¹⁶⁷ All of Jesus' sufferings are for humanity. She repeatedly relates Jesus' suffering and death to its effects on the believer:

So making Yourself small, You have made humanity great. Saturated with shame, You have filled him with happiness. Having suffered hunger, You have saturated him in the affection of Your charity. Stripping Yourself of life, You have clothed him with grace. Filling Yourself with shame, You have restored honor to him. Being darkened, You have restored to humanity the light. Being stretched out upon the cross, You have embraced him.¹⁶⁸

Because Catherine is so convinced that Jesus' death proves God's love, the crucified Christ pervades all of her writings. Giuliana Cavallini has observed: "The feel-

¹⁶⁶ "[V]edendosi quasi consumato tempo (vedevasi nell'ultimo che egli doveva fare sacrificio nel corpo suo al Padre per noi) gode ed esulta, e con letizia dice: 'Con desiderio io ho desiderato'. Questa era la Pasqua che egli diceva, cioè di dare sè medesimo in cibo, e per obediencia del Padre fare sacrificio del corpo suo" (Letter 36, I, 137). For another reference to Jesus's desire for the Passover, see Letter 207.

¹⁶⁷ "Diceremo e giudicremo che tu se'il dolce Idio nostro che non vuole altro che la nostra sanctificazione. Questo ci è manifesto evidentemente nel sangue del tuo Figliuolo, el quale per la nostra salute corse come innamorato all'obrobriosa morte della santissima croce" (*Oratio* XIX, 214). This prayer was made on Sexagesima Sunday, February 13, 1379.

¹⁶⁸ "E così facendo te piccolo hai fatto grande l'uomo, satollato di obrobrii l'hai riempito di beatitudine, avendo tu patito fame l'hai satollato nell'affetto della tua carità, spogliandoti della vita hai vestito esso della grazia, riempito tu di vergogna hai reso a lui l'onore, essendo oscurato tu quanto all'umanità hai reso a lui il lume, essendo disteso tu sulla croce hai abbracciato esso" (*Oratio* XII, 148). Catherine gave this prayer on Passion Sunday, March 27, 1379.

ing of Catherine is not different from the feeling of St. Paul: her Christ is Christ crucified. If she contemplates the baby Jesus, she sees 'the little boy, born with the cross to His shoulder.'¹⁶⁹ Kenelm Foster also has remarked: "At whatever point we enter the mind of Catherine we at once encounter Christ crucified."¹⁷⁰

The criticism might well be made that Catherine does not emphasize the Resurrection sufficiently. Her explicit references to the Resurrection are few and are overshadowed by her references to the Passion. The allusions to the Resurrection that she does make are presented to instill confidence in God's love, as are those of the Passion. For example, she writes: "And to give us also hope of our Resurrection, which we will have on the last day of Judgment, He has shown His Resurrection."¹⁷¹ One prayer, *Oratio XIII*, "Cristo Resurrezione Nostra," written on Thursday of Easter Week, April 14, 1379, centers on the Risen Christ. In this prayer, Jesus is the gardener and also the gatekeeper who opens the garden that was closed by the sin of Adam.¹⁷²

Nevertheless, despite her lack of explicit mention of the Resurrection, Catherine's crucified Jesus is already the victorious Jesus. Maria Bianco has noted: "For Catherine, Christ on the cross is always triumphant."¹⁷³ Thus, Catherine describes Jesus as joyful on the cross: "Think...that upon the cross I was happy and I was sad. I was happy through the union of the divine nature in the human nature. Nevertheless, the flesh suffered pain."¹⁷⁴ Catherine sees the transforming power of the Risen Christ in the image of the crucified Christ. She prefers to focus on the crucified Christ because, for her, this aspect of the Paschal mystery is the most graphic manifestation of the immense love of God desiring to save and sanctify humanity.

¹⁶⁹ "Non diverso dal sentire di san Paolo è il sentire di Caterina: il 'suo' Cristo è il Cristo crocifisso. Se contempla il bambino Gesù, lo vede 'fanciullo parvolo, nato con la croce al collo.'" Giuliana Cavallini, "Le Immagini Cateriniane del Cristo," *L'Arbore della carità* 42/2 (1991): 61.

¹⁷⁰ Kenelm Foster, O.P., "St. Catherine's Teaching on Christ," *Life of the Spirit* 16 (1962): 313.

¹⁷¹ "[E] per darci anco speranza della nostra resurrezione, la quale averemo nell'ultimo di del Giudizio, egli ha manifestato la resurrezione sua" (Letter 110, II, 156). Noffke places this letter to Monna Stricca di Cione di Sandro Salimbeni between August and October 1377. For a reference to the glorified body as the hope of our future resurrection, see *Il Dialogo*, XLI.

¹⁷² See *Le Orazioni*, 156-165.

¹⁷³ "Per Caterina però Gesù sulla croce è sempre un trionfatore." Maria Grazia Bianco, "Temi patristici in S. Caterina," in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Cateriniani, Siena-Roma 24-29 aprile 1980* (Roma: Curia Generalizia O.P., 1981), 66.

¹⁷⁴ "Pènsati...che in su la croce io ero beato, ed ero doloroso: beato ero per l'unione della natura divina nella natura umana; e nondimeno la carne sostenne pena" (Letter 221, III, 279). Catherine sent this letter to Suor Bartolomea della Seta, a nun in the monastery of Santo Stefano in Pisa. Noffke dates this letter between late April and early May 1376.

Paul preaches "Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:23), not because he fails to realize that the Resurrection completes Jesus' self sacrifice but because of the power of the image of the crucified Son of God. Catherine's intention is to draw her readers to God by evoking a response of love. For her, the crucified Christ illustrates the truth of God's love most clearly. In His crucifixion, Christ brings about the truth of the Father: namely, that humanity is enabled to fulfill the purpose for which it was created, sharing eternal life with the Father.

Images for Jesus' Saving Actions

While other thirteenth- and fourteenth-century spiritual writers also focus their reflections on the crucified Christ, Catherine's approach differs from theirs. Giovanni Getto makes some interesting observations about Catherine's treatment of the Passion:

The Passion finds in her a rather original position. St. Catherine never stopped to reconstruct this grand scene in its various constitutive elements. She does not seem to demonstrate any real interest for the deed considered in its historical concreteness. The Passion in its contingent reality does not have for the saint any importance. It is, instead, on its inmost significance that she continually dwells. It is a way of proceeding, therefore, that is very different from that of the Franciscan spirituality, typical examples of which are in many of the writings of St. Bonaventure, which form a vast diorama of the account of the Passion. The Franciscans, to stir feelings of devotion and then of love in the soul, described the Passion minutely in its slow unraveling and in its rising cruelty.... In Catherine a *Via Crucis* would not be conceivable. For her, the Passion is summarized in the vision of the "gentle Word of God who ran as one in love to the shameful death of the cross".... Therefore her allusions to the Passion...are always very brief and concise. Everything is directed to grasp its interior significance, rather than its phenomenal appearances.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ "La Passione trova in lei un' impostazione assai originale. Santa Caterina non si ferma mai a ricomporre questa scena grandiosa nei suoi vari elementi costitutivi. Ella non sembra dimostrare nessun vero interesse per il fatto considerato nella sua storica concretezza. La Passione nella sua contingente realtà non ha per la santa nessuna importanza. È invece sul valore intimo di essa che ella insiste continuamente. Un modo di procedere, perciò ben diverso da quello della spiritualità francescana, di cui sono tipico esempio molti degli scritti di san Bonaventura, i quali formano come un vasto diorama della cronaca della Passione. I francescani, per produrre nell'anima sentimenti di pietà e quindi di amore, descrivono minutamente la Passione nel suo lento svolgimento e nella sua crescente crudeltà.... In Caterina una 'Via Crucis' non sarebbe concepibile. Per lei la Passione si riassume nella visione del 'Verbo dolce del Figliolo di Dio' che 'corse come innamorato alla obrobiosa morte della croce'.... Perciò i suoi accenni alla Passione, sono sempre d'altra parte assai rapidi e concisi. Tutti, poi, sono volti a cogliere il significato interiore di essa, piuttosto che la sua fenomenica apparenza." Giovanni Getto, *Letteratura religioso del Trecento*, 232.

Tito Centi, O.P., likewise observes: "Her preferences are for the psychological introspections from which emerge the interior dispositions of the Divine Redeemer: 'the cross of desire,' the weight of human ingratitude, the thirst for the honor of the Father and of the salvation of souls."¹⁷⁶ Catherine considers primarily the purpose of the Passion, the end for which it happened.

Catherine describes the Passion not in its concrete details but through the use of symbols in order to illustrate God's saving desires. As a mystic, Catherine habitually relates her ideas and experiences through symbols, using vivid and colorful images. Many of these images are borrowed from the preaching and reading to which she was exposed, but even then she fashions them in such a way as to emphasize the centrality of God's love in the Passion. Catherine's images almost always draw attention to Jesus' desire to save humanity.

Quite frequently, Catherine has recourse to the image of the Lamb, a New Testament symbol for the crucified Christ. In her hands, the image takes on an explicit identification with God's love. Thus, rather than relate the details of Jesus' death, Catherine speaks of His body as being roasted: "We will find the lamb roasted on the fire of divine charity."¹⁷⁷ The cross becomes the spit: "O sweet lamb, roasted at the fire of divine charity, on the spit of the most holy cross!"¹⁷⁸ Catherine considers the Lamb as food, thus relating the death of the Lamb to its effects for humanity: "Satisfying us with the food of the Lamb, which Lamb was baked and roasted on the wood of the most holy cross with the fire of love, in the honor of the Father and of our salvation."¹⁷⁹

Catherine repeats her images, reworking them with a certain fluidity. Thus, she incorporates the symbol of the lamb into the traditional image of a debt owed to the devil in order to relate the meaning of Jesus' death:

¹⁷⁶ "Le sue preferenze sono per le introspezioni psicologiche, in cui emergono le disposizioni interiori del Redentore Divino: 'la croce del desiderio', il peso dell'ingratitude umana, la sete dell'onore del Padre e della salvezza delle anime." Tito S. Centi, O.P., "Il mistero della Croce nella vita e nel pensiero di santa Caterina da Siena," *Rassegna di Ascetica e Mistica* 26 (1975): 336.

¹⁷⁷ "[N]oi troviamo l'agnello arrostito al fuoco della divina carità" (Letter 32, I, 121). Catherine wrote this letter to Frate Jacomo da Padua, prior of the Olivetan monastery in Florence. Noffke places this letter near July 1375, or as late as early 1376.

¹⁷⁸ "O agnello dolce, arrostito al fuoco della divina carità, allo spedone della santissima croce!" (Letter 52, I, 201). This letter was written to an Augustinian hermit, Frate Jeronimo da Siena. Noffke dates this letter between February and April 1376, and probably in Holy Week, April 6-12. For another example of Jesus as the lamb Who gives His life for His sheep, see Letter 125.

¹⁷⁹ "[E] saziaci...del cibo dell'Agnello (il quale Agnello fu cotto e arrostito in sul legno della santissima croce col fuoco dell'amore, dell'onore del Padre e della salute nostra)" (Letter 90, II, 82). This letter was sent to Madonna Laudomia, wife of Carlo delli Strozzi, who was a wealthy leader of the Guelf party in Florence. Noffke places this letter between August 20 and October 31, 1378.

He came as the payment and the payer and ripped up the paper of obligation. When did He come in payment? When He made himself a servant, taking our humanity. Alas, that was not enough for us, if He had not paid the debt incurred through us. And when did He pay? On the wood of the most holy cross, giving His life to give us the life of grace, which we lost. O inestimable sweetest charity! You have destroyed the paper which was between us and the devil, tearing it on the wood of the most holy cross. The paper was not composed of anything other than the lamb, and this is that immaculate Lamb who wrote us on Himself, and He tore up the paper. Let then our souls be encouraged, because we were written, and the paper destroyed. Our adversary and our reckoner is no longer able to send for us. Now let us run, sweetest son, with holy and true desire, embracing virtue with the memory of the sweet lamb, bleeding with such burning love.¹⁸⁰

Undoubtedly, Sano di Maco, the wool-worker who received this letter, would have been especially struck by the portrayal of Jesus' body as a parchment of lambskin torn apart on the cross. Catherine's images of the Passion have a very personal tone. Thus the "immaculate Lamb" writes the human race upon Himself. He becomes the paper on which the debt is recorded and which is torn in the Passion by His own choice.

Catherine blends an image of the cross with that of the lamb to illustrate the power of Jesus' redemptive death for those who rely upon it: "Let this be the stick of the most holy cross. On this stick you will find the slain lamb, consumed with love, who defends us from the enemy of our sensuality."¹⁸¹ On occasion, Catherine adds multiple images to that of the lamb. These images emphasize the healing and nurturing effects of the death of the lamb: "Only Christ crucified was that lamb who with ineffable love bled and opened His body, giving Himself to us as a bath

¹⁸⁰ "Egli intrò in ricolta e pagatore, e stracciò la carta dell'obligazione. Quando intrò in ricolta? Quando si fece servo, prendendo la nostra umanità. Oimè, non bastava a noi, se non avesse pagato il debito fatto per noi. E quando si pagò? In su legno della santissima croce, dando la vita per renderci la vita della grazia, la quale noi perdemmo. O inestimabile dolcissima carità! tu ài rotta la carta che era tra l'uomo e 'l dimonio, stracciandola in su legno della santissima croce. La carta non è fatta d'altro che d'agnello, e questo è quello agnello immacolato el quale ci à scritti in sè medesimo; ma stracciò questa carta. Confortinsi dunque l'anime nostre, poi che siamo scritti, e rotta la carta; non ci può più dimandare l'avversario e contrario nostro. Or corriamo, figliuolo dolcissimo, con santo e vero desiderio, abbracciando le virtù, con la memoria del dolce agnello, svenato con tanto ardentissimo amore" (Letter 69, I, 263-264). See also DT XXIV, 103-106. This letter was sent to letter to Sano di Maco. The letter seems to refer to the Gospel story of the Canaanite woman, used in the Liturgy on the first Thursday of Lent, as well as Jerome's commentary on it, which Catherine would have been familiar with through the Divine Office. If that assumption is correct, the letter may likely have been written on March 15, 1375, or at least early in 1375.

¹⁸¹ "Questo...sia il bastone della santissima croce. Nel quale bastone troverete l'agnello svenato consumato d'amore; il quale ci difende dal nemico della nostra sensualità" (Letter 278, IV, 187-188). This letter was addressed to Monna Bartolomea di Domenico in Rome. Noffke suggests May of 1377 for the date of this letter.

and as a medicine and as a food and as a garment and as a bed where we are able to repose."¹⁸²

In another instance, the lamb is also an eagle, illustrating not only Jesus' sacrificial offering of Himself but also His firm intent to fulfill the Father's will for our salvation: "This sweet Lamb is a true eagle, who does not regard the earth of His humanity, but fixes His eye solely on the wheel of the sun, in the eternal Father, because He sees in Himself that His will is this, that we be sanctified in Him."¹⁸³

Catherine weaves together images of the lamb with the lion to depict both Jesus' human nature that suffers and His divine nature that empowers His love for humanity:

And if you might ask, from where will I get this cry and mighty voice? From the lamb, who according to our humanity does not cry but remains meek. But His divinity gives power to the cry of the Son with a voice of immeasurable charity, through the force and the power of the divine essence of the love which has united God with humanity. With this power the lamb is made a lion, and staying upon the chair of the cross, He has roared so powerfully over the dead child, the human race, that He has taken away death and has given life.¹⁸⁴

Another image that Catherine uses for Christ is that of the doctor: "He was our doctor who came to heal the human race, which was lying sick."¹⁸⁵ In *Il Dialogo*,

¹⁸² "[S]olo Cristo crocifisso fu quello agnello che con l'amore ineffabile esvenò e aperse el corpo suo, dandocisi in bagno e in medicina e in cibo e in vestimento e in letto dove ci potiamo riposare" (Letter 166, III, 48). Catherine sent this letter to Colomba da Lucca, encouraging her to be less worldly. Noffke dates this letter between October 1375 and January 1376.

¹⁸³ "[Q]uesto dolce Agnello è una aquila vera, che non ragguarda la terra della sua umanità; ma ferma l'occhio solo nella ruota del sole, nel Padre eterno; chè in sè medesimo vede che la volontà sua è questa, che noi siamo santificati in lui" (Letter 36, I, 137). This letter was sent to Frate Simone di Giovanni and other novices of the Monteoliveto Benedictines at San Michele in Bosco in Bologna. Noffke sets this letter between April 6-12, 1376. For other references to Jesus as an eagle, see Letters 259 and 134.

¹⁸⁴ "E se diceste: dove averò questo grido e voce forte? Dall'agnello, che secondo l'umanità non grida, ma sta mansueto, secondo la divinità dà potentia al grido del Figliuolo con la voce della smisurata sua carità: sì che, per la forza e potenza della divina essentia e dell'amore che à unito Dio con l'uomo, con questa virtù è fatto l'agnello uno leone, e, stando in sulla cattedra della croce, à fatto sì fatto grido sopra el figliuolo morto dell'umana generatione che gli à tolta la morte e data la vita" (Letter 177, III, 93). Catherine wrote this letter, trying to rouse Cardinal Pietro Corsini, a native of Florence, to help resolve the difficulties between the pope and his native city. Noffke concludes that this letter was written near Palm Sunday, April 6. St. Bernard describes Jesus as a lion rousing His young: "For the lion of the tribe of Judah conquered. The young lion has been lifted up by the paternal voice." "Vicit enim leo de tribu Juda. Suscitatus est paterna voce leonis catulus," Sermo V, "In die Paschae"; PL 183, 277.

¹⁸⁵ "Egli fu nostro medico che venne a sanare l'umana generazione, la quale giacea inferma" (Letter 33, I, 124). Catherine wrote this letter to the major abbot of the Olivetan monks. Noffke gives

Catherine uses the theme of humanity's sickness to develop one of her most tender images:

As the sin of Adam brought a deadly pus, the great doctor, My only-begotten Son, treated this sickness, drinking the bitter medicine, which humanity was not able to drink because it was too weak. And He did as a wet nurse does, who takes the medicine of the child personally, because she is big and strong and the child is not strong enough to be able to bear the bitterness. So He was the wet nurse, bearing, with the greatness and strength of the Godhead united with your nature, the bitter medicine of the painful death of the cross, to heal and to give life to you, babies weakened by the sin.¹⁸⁶

In a letter sent on Holy Thursday to those in prison, Catherine describes Christ both assuming our sickness and taking our medicine as a wet nurse:

I say that He is sick, that is, that He has taken our weakness, taking our mortality and mortal flesh. And upon this flesh of His most tender body He has punished our sins.... It really is true then, that You have taken the bitter medicine for us weak and sick children, and with your death You give us life, and with bitterness You give us sweetness. You hold us to Your breast as a wet nurse, and You have given us the milk of divine grace. You have taken the bitterness and we receive the health. So you see that He is made sick for us.¹⁸⁷

This tender image of Jesus as the wet nurse depicts Jesus involving Himself with humanity in a most physical and personal manner. His sacrifice of Himself is done with the greatest affection for humanity.

A less gentle image, to which Catherine frequently has recourse, is that of the cross as an anvil. While the image evokes the idea of harsh punishment, Catherine stresses the intensity of Jesus' suffering only to accentuate His love: "I sent Him that He might be raised on high upon the wood of the cross, making of the cross

a possible date between September 15 and October 31, 1378, for this letter. For an example of both Jesus and the Father being described as the doctor, see *Il Dialogo*, CXXXIV.

¹⁸⁶ "Così la colpa d'Adam, la quale menò marcia mortale: venuto el grande medico de l'unigenito mio Figliuolo, curò questo infermo, beiendo la medicina amara, la quale l'uomo bere non poteva perchè era molto indebilito. E' fece come baglia che piglia la medicina in persona del fanciullo, perchè ella è grande e forte ed il fanciullo non è forte a potere portare l'amaritudine. Sì che egli fu baglia, portando con la grandezza e fortezza della deità, unita con la natura vostra, l'amara medicina della penosa morte della croce, per sanare e dar vita a voi, fanciulli indebiliti per la colpa" (*Il Dialogo*, XIV, 49).

¹⁸⁷ "Dico ch' egli è infermo cioè, che egli ha presa la nostra infirmità, prendendo la nostra mortalità, e carne mortale; e sopra a essa carne del dolcissimo corpo suo ha puniti e difetti nostri.... Bene è vero adunque, che tu hai presa l'amara medicina per noi fanciulli debili e infermi, e colla tua morte ci dai la vita, e coll'amaritudine ci dai la dolcezza. Tu ci tieni al petto come balia, e hai dato a noi il latte della divina Grazia, e per te hai tolta l'amaritudine; e così riceviamo la sanità. Sicchè vedete che gli è infermato per noi" (Letter 260, IV, 111-112). Noffke believes that the date of this letter is Holy Thursday, March 26, 1377.

an anvil where the Son of the human race might be formed by drawing out death and restoring it to the life of grace.... He could not show you greater love than to give His life for you."¹⁸⁸

The public nature of the crucifixion is an open demonstration of the intensity of God's love for humanity, proved by the voluntary sufferings of Jesus on the cross. While Catherine employs the vocabulary of punishment, the vision of God's love prevails: "In Him is justice, for to punish the fault He gave Himself to the shameful death of the cross, making an anvil of His body, which He made with the fire of His charity, with the hammer of the greatest suffering."¹⁸⁹ Jesus' love refashions the soul: "There He bore the weight of our iniquities. There they made Him as an anvil under a hammer, and so the soul was fashioned in the pains of Christ by means of the fire of His charity."¹⁹⁰

The sufferings on the cross, illustrated by the image of the anvil, are ordered to the good of those who would receive salvation. On account of the broken relationship with God, human efforts had lost their true significance. Jesus' sufferings give value to human virtue:

So much did the sin displease Him, that He wished to punish it upon His body. Indeed, He made of it an anvil, upon which He set our iniquity. And so much did He love the honor of the Father and our salvation that to render to Him the honor and to us the life of grace which we had lost through the sin of Adam, and in order that virtue and the good and holy life might be of value to us for eternal life, He ran to the shameful death of the most holy cross.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ "[M]anda'lo perché fosse levato in alto in sul legno della croce, facendone una ancodine dove si fabbricasse il figliuolo dell'umana generazione, per tollargli la morte e restituirlo alla vita della grazia.... Maggiore amore mostrare non vi poteva, che dare la vita per voi" (*Il Dialogo*, XXVI, 71). For another example in which Jesus' body as the anvil, see *Il Dialogo*, XXXV.

¹⁸⁹ "In lui è giustizia, in tanto che, per punire la colpa, diè sè medesimo all'obbrobriosa morte della croce, facendo ancodine del corpo suo, la quale fabricò col fuoco della sua carità, col martello delle grandissime pene" (Letter 318, V, 53). This letter was sent to Sano di Maco and her disciples in Siena when Catherine was in Rome. Noffke suggests somewhere between January 15 and 31, 1378, as the date of this letter.

¹⁹⁰ "Ine portò elli e' pesi delle nostre iniquitadi; ine si fabbricarono come l'ancudine sotto el martello, e così fabbricata l'anima nelle pene di Cristo per mezzo del fuoco della sua carità" (Letter 161, III, 28). This letter was written to Monna Nella Buonconti and to her daughter-in-law, Monna Caterina Buonconti, members of a wealthy family who had hosted Catherine when she went to Pisa. Gherardo, Monna Caterina's husband, along with two of his brothers, accompanied Catherine to Avignon. He, at times, served as her secretary. Noffke dates this letter between March and April 1376.

¹⁹¹ "Tanto gli dispiacque la colpa, che egli la volse punire sopra il corpo suo. Anco, ne fece una ancodine, sopra la quale fabricò le nostre iniquità; e tanto amò l'onore del padre e la salute nostra, che per rendere a lui l'onore e a noi la vita della grazia, la quale avemo perduta per la colpa d'Adam, e acciò chè la virtù e la buona e santa vita ci valesse a vita eterna, corse all'obbrobriosa morte della santissima croce" (Misciattelli, Letter XV, VI, 37-38). See Gardner, VII, 419. This is one of the six

Contemplating the nails, Catherine perceives the paradox that the nails that held Jesus to the cross unlock heaven: "The nails were made keys for us that have unlocked eternal life."¹⁹² The nails are the keys to heaven: "The blood has made us strong and has put us in possession of eternal life because the nails were made keys for us and have unlocked the door, that stayed closed for the sin which had been committed."¹⁹³

For Catherine, the figure of the knight suggests heroic courage in the face of great challenges. In her letters, she depicts temptations as battles and encourages her readers to be true knights in meeting these difficulties.¹⁹⁴ Jesus personifies the qualities of the true knight: "This sweet Word, going up on the horse upon the wood of the most holy cross, as a true knight, has defeated the enemies, and has put us in possession of lasting life."¹⁹⁵ In a more extensive analogy she draws upon her reader's familiarity with knights and battles to demonstrate that Jesus' love has overcome the devil and the sinful aspects of the world:

Our king acts as a true knight who perseveres in the battle until the enemies are defeated.... He defeated the enemy of our flesh with His scourged flesh. With true humility, God, humbling Himself to humanity, with suffering and shame, defeated pride, the pleasures and status of the world. With His wisdom, He conquered the malice of the devil. So with His hand disarmed, bound and nailed on the cross, He has conquered the prince of the world, taking for a horse the wood of the most holy cross. This our knight came armed with the armor of the flesh of Mary, which flesh received in itself the blows to repair our flesh. The helmet on His head, the painful crown of thorns, [was] thrust even to the brain. The sword at the side of the wound of the chest, shows us the secret of the heart, which is a sword to whomever has light, that the heart and our interior ought to pass by the affection of love. The reed [is stuck] in His hand for derision. And as in the hand, the spurs on the feet

letters discovered by the English Dante scholar, Edmund Gardner, and published by him in 1907. The letter is addressed to Pietro Canigiani, a disciple in Florence. His son, Barduccio Canigiani, acted as Catherine's scribe and adds a note to his father in this letter. This letter is a good example of the manner by which Catherine acknowledges the evil of sin but then directs attention to the extent of Jesus' love for us.

¹⁹² "[I] chiodi ci sono fatti chiave che ha disserrata vita eterna" (Letter 184, III, 116). This letter was sent to the prior and the members of the Compagnia della Vergine Maria, who nursed the sick at the large hospital in Siena, Santa Maria della Scala. Noffke suggests that this letter was written near Holy Week, 1377.

¹⁹³ "El sangue ci à fatti forti, e àcci messi in possessione di vita eterna; perocchè e' chiovi ci son fatte chiavi che hanno disserrata la porta, che stava chiusa per lo peccato che era commesso" (Letter 112, II, 163). This letter was written to the Countess Bandeçça, of the powerful Salimbeni family. Noffke dates this letter near April 1377.

¹⁹⁴ For examples, see Letters 142, 148, and 159.

¹⁹⁵ "Questo dolce Verbo salendo a cavallo in sul legno della santissima croce, come vero cavaliere, ha sconfitti e' nemici, e ha messi noi in possessione della vita durabile" (Letter 112, II, 163).

are the bright red wounds of the hands and feet of this our gentle and loving Word.
And what has armed Him? Love.¹⁹⁶

Catherine gives credit to St. Augustine for the idea of the unarmed knight.¹⁹⁷ This image is powerful for her because it embodies Jesus' chosen vulnerability in overcoming not only the devil but the power of death:

I say that He is a knight, having come into this battlefield, He has fought and conquered the devil. Saint Augustine says, 'With a unarmed hand, our knight has defeated our enemies, mounting a horse on the wood of the most holy cross.' The crown of thorns was His helmet, His whipped flesh the armor, His nailed hands the gloves of the armor. The spear through His side was that sword which cut and chopped off death from humanity, and His nailed feet are the spurs.¹⁹⁸

Catherine elsewhere associates this image of the knight with St. Bernard.¹⁹⁹ Petrocchi suggests that Catherine received this theme of Christ as a knight from Cav-

¹⁹⁶ "Il re nostro fa come vero cavaliere che persevera nella battaglia insino che sono sconfitti i nemici... Con la carne sua flagellata sconfisse il nemico della carne nostra; con la vera umiltà (umiliandosi Dio all'uomo) con la pena e obrobrio sconfisse la superbia, le delizie e stati del mondo; con la sapienzia sua vinse la malizia del dimonio. Sicchè con la mano disarmata, confitta e chiavellata in croce, ha vinto il principe del mondo, pigliando per cavallo il legno della santissima croce. Venne armato questo nostro cavaliere colla corazza della carne di Maria, la quale carne ricevete in sè colpi per riparare alle nostre iniquità. L'elmo in testa, la penosa corona delle spine, affondata insino al cerebro. La spada allato la piaga del costato, che ci mostra il segreto del cuore; la quale è uno coltello, a chi ha punto di lume, che debbe trapassare il cuore e l'interiora nostre per affetto d'amore. La canna in mano per derisione. E' quanti in mano, e gli sproni in piè, sono le piaghe vermiglie delle mani e delli piedi di questo dolce e amoroso Verbo. E chi l'ha armato? l'amore" (Letter 256, IV, 88-89). This letter was sent to Niccolò dei Strozzi, prior of the Pisan Hospitalers of St. John. Noffke dates this letter between March and early April.

¹⁹⁷ Catherine apparently derived this from Cavalca, who also attributes the idea to Augustine. "E, come dice santo Agostino, 'con la mano disarmata e confitta in croce sconfisse i demonii.'" Domenico Cavalca, *Lo Specchio della Croce*, a cura di Tito Sante Centi, O.P. (Bologna: Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 1992), 256. There is one reference where St. Augustine seems to be speaking of a knight and the cross: "To Him therefore we reach who redeemed us, who conquered the world for us, not as an armed knight, but with a ridiculed cross." Augustine, *In Psalmum LXII*; PL 41, 760.

¹⁹⁸ "Dico ch' egli è cavaliere, venuto in questo campo della battaglia; ha combattuto e vinto le dimonia. Dice santo Agostino: 'Con la mano disarmata questo nostro cavaliere ha sconfitti e' nemici nostri, salendo a cavallo in sul legno della santissima croce.' La corona delle spine fu l'elmo, la carne flagellata l'usbergo, le mani chiavellate e' guanti della piastra, la lancia per lo costato fu quel coltello che tagliò e recise la morte dall'uomo, e' piedi confitti sonno li speroni" (Letter 260, IV, 112). For examples of Jesus being portrayed as a captain, see Letters 188 and 257.

¹⁹⁹ "This sweet knight came, as says Saint Bernard, and going up as a knight upon the wood of the most holy cross, He put on Himself the helmet of the crown of thorns firmly placed, and nails in His hands and His feet and a spear in His side to show us the secret of His heart.... And St. Augustine says that with the hand fixed and nailed He conquered the demon." "Venne questo dolce cavaliere, come dice santo Bernardo, e salse a cavallo in sul legno della santissima croce, e misesi l'elmo della corona delle spine bene fondata, e' chiovi nelle mani e ne' piei, e la lancia nel costato, per manifestarci

alca: "There is present in him the theme of Christ as an armed knight (inherited from a common European religious literature, which is then picked up with more vigor by Saint Catherine of Siena.)"²⁰⁰ As Petrocchi notes, Catherine's images are not necessarily original but she animates these images with her own vision, always accentuating the loving motives of the redemption.

Another image Catherine employs is that of Christ as a teacher on the cross: "He is the gentle teacher who has taught us the doctrine, rising upon the chair of the most holy cross."²⁰¹ The height of the cross symbolically makes Jesus' teaching more apparent: "And this teacher is lifted on high on the chair of the cross, in order that we might be able to study it better, that we might not deceive ourselves by saying, 'He taught me it on earth, not on high.' It is not so because He is lifted on the cross, and through suffering He seeks the grandeur of the honor of the Father and to restore the beauty of the soul upon the cross."²⁰² In emphasizing the visibility of Christ's teaching on the cross, Catherine is depicting Jesus' suffering on the cross as a revelation of God's desires for humanity. On the cross, Jesus proclaims

el segreto del cuore.... E santo Agostino dice che colla mano confitta e chiavellata à sconfitte le demonia" (Letter 97, II, 111). Catherine may have found this reference to St. Bernard in Cavalca. "E però dice santo Bernardo: 'Molto è largo questo dispensatore, il quale ha dato la carne in cibo, ed il sangue in bevaggio; la vita in prezzo, le ferite in rimedio, le braccia stese in rifugio, la croce per iscuolo, il cuore aperto in segno di amore, l'acqua in bagno, il sudore in medicina, li chiavelli e la corona di spine per ornamento, le parole in maestramento, la vita e la morta tutta in esempio, le vestimenta à crocifissori, al discepolo la madre, al ladrone il paradiso, sicchè tutto egli dispensò e diede per larghezza.'" Domenico Cavalca, *Lo Specchio della croce*, 56.

²⁰⁰ "È in lui presente il tema di Cristo cavaliere armato (ereditato da una comune letteratura religiosa europea, e di poi ripreso con più gusto da S. Catherina da Siena)." Massimo Petrocchi, *Storia della spiritualità italiana* (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1978), 63.

²⁰¹ "Egli è el dolce maestro che ci à insegnata la dottrina, salendo in sulla cathedra della santissima croce" (Letter 235, IV, 10). This letter is addressed to the King of France, Charles V. Noffke places this letter in August 1376, while Catherine was in Avignon. St. Augustine uses this image of Jesus as a teacher: "Christ on the chair of the cross, teaching the rule of piety." "Christus in crucis cathedra docens regulam pietatis" ("Sermo CCCXV"; PL 38, 1430). Augustine uses this same image elsewhere: "That cross was a school. There the teacher taught the thief. The wood of hanging was made a chair of teaching." "Crux illa, schola erat. Ibi docuit magister latronem. Lignum pendentis, cathedra factum est docentis" ("Sermo CCXXXIX"; PL 38, 1116). Catherine may have found the idea in Domenico Cavalca: "Christ stays on the cross as a teacher to teach upon the chair." "Cristo...è in croce, quasi come un maestro sulla cathedra, che insegna..." (*Lo Specchio della croce*, prologo, 26). For another example of Catherine's presentation of Jesus as a teacher, see Letter 216.

²⁰² "È levato in alto questo maestro nella cattedra della croce, acciocchè meglio la potiamo studiare, che noi non ci ingannassimo di dire: 'Egli me la insegnò in terra, e non in alto'. Non è così: chè egli è salito in croce, e con pena cerca l'altezza dell'onore del Padre, e di restituire la bellezza dell'anima suso in croce" (Letter 316, V, 39). This letter was written just before Catherine left for Rome at the call of Pope Urban VI, between October 15 and November 10, 1378. This letter was sent to Suor Daniella who was in Orvieto.

the Father's honor and instructs humanity on God's desire to restore the soul's beauty.

On the cross, Jesus teaches love and virtue through His heroic example. He personifies the lessons He taught in the Gospels: "Where has this sweet and loving Word taught us this teaching? On the chair of the most holy cross. And there He washed the face of our soul with His precious blood. I say that He taught us the way of love and the teaching of virtue. He showed us in what way we ought to love, if we wish to have life."²⁰³ Jesus' blood teaches the love of the Father for humanity more effectively than any book: "He wrote it in His body, not with ink but with His blood, with the letters so large that no one is of such low understanding that he is able to excuse himself. You clearly see the paragraphs of this book, as they are so big. And all show the truth of the Eternal Father, the ineffable love with which we were created."²⁰⁴

Jesus' crucified body teaches the truth of God's love so clearly that no one can mistake it but His affection is best understood by those who approach Him with affection:

With the light of faith, he sees that One is lifted up upon the chair of the cross, and teaches us the doctrine, having written it upon His body. He made Himself a book, with paragraphs so big that there is no person so stupid nor of such small vision, that he is not able to read it abundantly and perfectly. Read then, let our soul read! And to be better able to read it, let the feet of our affection rise in the affection of Christ crucified.²⁰⁵

In Catherine's writings, everything that Jesus does is done for the good of humanity. To illustrate this truth, Catherine uses images of feeding and sleeping: "Oh

²⁰³ "Dove ce l'ha insegnata questa dottrina questo dolce e amoroso Verbo? In su la cattedra della santissima croce. Ed ine ci lavò la faccia dell'anima nostra col prezioso sangue suo. Dico che c' insegnò la via dell'amore e la dottrina della virtù. Egli ci mostrò in che modo noi doviamo amare, a volere avere la vita" (Letter 35, I, 132). This letter was sent to monks at the monastery of Monte Oliveto.

²⁰⁴ "[S]crissela nel corpo suo con lettera sì grosse, che veruno è di sì basso intendimento che si possa scusare; non con inchiostro, ma col sangue suo. Bene vedi tu i capoversi di questo libro, quanto essi sono grandi; e tutti manifestano la verità del Padre eterno, l'amore ineffabile con che fummo creati" (Letter 316, V, 39). Domenico Cavalca develops the idea of Christ as a book. See Domenico Cavalca, *Lo Specchio della Croce*, 282-287. Catherine may have been familiar with St. Bruno's reference to Christ as a book through her Carthusian friends: "The book, however, is said to be Christ." "Liber autem dicitur Christus" (*Expositio In Psalmos*; PL 152, 805).

²⁰⁵ "Il quale, vede col lume della fede, che è salito in su la cattedra della croce, e insegnici la dottrina; avendola scritta nel corpo suo: e fece di sè un libro, con capoversi sì grossi, che non è uomo tanto idiotto, nè di sì poco vedere, che non ci possa largamente e perfettamente leggere. Legga dunque, legga l'anima nostra: e per meglio poterlo leggere, salgano i piedi dell'affetto nostro nell'affetto di Cristo crocifisso" (Letter 318, V, 51-52). This letter was sent to Sano di Maco and her other disciples in Siena, while she was in Rome. Noffke suggests between January 15 and 31, 1379, for this letter's date.

peace, oh quiet, oh sweetness which the soul tastes and receives, having come to his port, to find the slain lamb, whom he sought upon the cross, who is made a table, food, and a server. And he finds the bed of the divine essence, where the soul reposes and sleeps."²⁰⁶

At other times, Catherine modifies her images so that not only Christ but the entire Trinity serves humanity as a result of the restored relationship: "You see that the Father is a table for us, who holds everything which is in Himself, except for sin which is not in Him. The Word of God is made the food for us, roasted at the fire of the most burning charity. The Holy Spirit, charity Himself, is the servant for us, for through His hands, He has given and gives God. He continually serves us every grace and spiritual and temporal gift."²⁰⁷

Rather than focus on the details of the Passion, Catherine concentrates on its purpose, which is to fulfill the truth of the Father in re-establishing God's original intention for humanity, the sharing of eternal life. In restoring this relationship between humanity and God, Jesus gives honor to the Father and demonstrates the immense love that God has for humanity. The intensity of the sufferings, which Jesus willingly accepts, manifests the love of the Incarnate Son of God. The diverse images that Catherine employs help her to express the love which she repeatedly calls "ineffable." Each image is an effort to discern some aspect of that love and to evoke a response of love for God in return.

The Blood, a Symbol Both of the Historical Redemption and of the Grace That Follows

Catherine has rightly been called the "Mystic of the Blood."²⁰⁸ The introductory sentences of her letters almost always include her intention to write "in the precious blood of the Son of God."²⁰⁹ Her writings repeatedly direct attention to the blood of Jesus, which is, for her, the material sign of the redemption.

²⁰⁶ "O pace, o quiete, o dolcezza, la quale gusta e riceve l'anima giunta al porto suo, a trovare l'agnello svenato, el quale egli cercò in sulla croce, el quale gli è fatto mensa, cibo, e servidore! E truova il letto della divina essenza, dove l'anima si riposa e dorme" (Letter 142, II. 277). Noffke places this letter between May and October 1375. This letter was sent to Sano di Maco when Catherine was in Pisa.

²⁰⁷ "Vedete che 'l Padre ci è mensa, che tiene in sè ogni cosa che è, eccetto che 'l peccato, che non è in lui. El verbo del Figliuolo di Dio ci è fatto cibo, arrostito al fuoco dell'ardentissima carità. Lo Spirito santo ci è servidore, essa carità, che per le sue mani ci à donato e dona Idio. Ogni grazia e dono spirituale e temporale egli ce la ministra continuamente" (Misciattelli, Letter IX, VI, 26). This letter was sent to Bartholmeo della Pace.

²⁰⁸ Giuliana Cavallini, introduction to *Il Dialogo*, xxxi.

²⁰⁹ "Nel pretioso sangue del Figliuolo di Dio."

Catherine's thought on the blood resonates passages on the blood found in the New Testament, particularly in the letters. The letter to the Ephesians describes Jesus' blood as the instrument of reconciliation: "We have redemption through His blood" (Eph. 1:7). 1 Peter speaks of our redemption as brought about "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pt. 1:19). For Paul, the blood brings justification: "Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom. 5:9). Reconciliation with God is obtained by believers through faith in Jesus' blood: "Whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood" (Rom. 3:25). 1 John states that the blood removes sin: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin" (1 Jn. 1:7).

The Letter to the Hebrews affirms that the blood that Jesus shed on the cross has the power to cleanse the human race not only at the time of His death but at the present: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14). In the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus acquires the Church through His blood: "The Church of God which He has purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). In the book of Revelation, the blood gives power to the saints over the dragon: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 12:11).

For Catherine, also, the blood is the concrete sign of the mystery of the redemption. The blood was and is the visible manifestation of God's love: "In ourselves, we find the blood which showed the love that God has for us. In that blood we received our redemption. Having lost the state of grace, we were recreated by grace. We are that vessel which has received the blood, because it was poured out for us."²¹⁰

The blood is the physical evidence of Jesus' desire to fulfill the truth of God in us. Through His blood, believers come to eternal life, the purpose for which they were created:

We ought to see that God loves us supremely, and for love was moved to create us in His image and likeness and to allow us to enjoy His eternal vision. What manifests this truth and this love to us? It is the blood of the humble and immaculate Lamb. This truth is not hidden from us; His blood is the manifestation. For if God

²¹⁰ "In noi troviamo il sangue che manifestò l'amore che Dio ci ha; nel qual sangue ricevemmo la nostra redenzione: avendo perduto l'essere della Grazia, fummo ricreati a Grazia. Noi siamo quello vasello che ha ricevuto il sangue, perchè solo fu sparto per noi" (Letter 304, IV, 275). Catherine wrote this letter to Monna Lodovica di Granello. Noffke locates this letter on August 26, 1378.

had not created us for this end, and did not love us inestimably, He would not have given us such a redeemer.²¹¹

As the demonstrable sign of Jesus' love, the blood represents the bond that humanity has with God. She compares the blood to the mortar which holds stones together in a wall: "As in the middle between stone and stone, to be bound together in strength, the lime soaked with water is placed. So God has set in the middle, between the creature and Himself, the blood of His only-begotten Son, soaked with the living lime of the fire of most burning charity, for there is not blood without fire, nor fire without blood. The blood was shed with the fire of the love that God had for the human race."²¹²

Catherine employs vivid analogies to explain the power of the blood. She likens Jesus' body to a cask, opened at Calvary: "At the time of the cross He put the lance in His side, and Longinus was the instrument, when He opened His heart. He emptied this cask of the life of His body, separating His own soul from His body. The blood was available, announced with the trumpet of mercy and with the trumpeter of the fire of the Holy Spirit, for whoever wishes this blood, let him go for it."²¹³ The cask of Jesus' body holds His soul but also His blood which, when the cask is tapped, pours forth mercy to those who will receive it. Catherine identifies this outpouring of mercy with the Holy Spirit.

Not only does the blood shed on the cross demonstrate the historical action of the Son of God on behalf of humanity, the blood represents the continuous transmission of the effects of Jesus' death to individuals. Catherine writes: "In the midst

²¹¹ "Dobbiamo vedere che Dio sommamente ci ama, e per amore si mosse a crearci alla sua immagine e similitudine per darci a godere l'eterna sua visione. Chi ci manifesta questa verità, e questo amore? Il sangue dell'umile e immacolato Agnello.... Non ci è nascosta questa verità; il sangue ce la manifesta. Che se Dio non ci avesse creati per lo fine che detto è, e non ci amasse inestimabilmente; già non ci avrebbe dato siffatto ricompratore" (Letter 9, I, 31-32). This letter was sent to an unnamed woman. Noffke proposes a date between January 1 and March 31, 1378. For a description of the soul inebriated on the blood, see Letter 124.

²¹² "Chè, come in mezzo tra pietra e pietra, per conformarsi insieme in fortezza, vi si mette la calcina intrisa con l'acqua, così Dio à messo in mezzo fra la creatura e sè il sangue dell'unigenito suo Figliuolo, intriso colla calcina viva del fuoco dell'ardentissima carità; però chè non è sangue senza fuoco, nè fuoco senza sangue. Isparto fu el sangue col fuoco dell'amore che Dio all'umana generazione ebbe" (Misciattelli, Letter IX, VI, 25). See also Gardner I, 409, and DT LII. Dupré dates this letter in the second half of 1375 since in 1376 Smeducci joined the forces of Perugia and Florence against the pope. See *Epistolario*, 201, n.1.

²¹³ "[M]a al tempo della croce si mise la canna nel costato suo, e Longino ne fu strumento, quando gli aperse il cuore. Votata questa botte della vita del corpo suo, separandosi l'anima da esso corpo; il sangue fu messo a mano, bandito con la tromba della misericordia e col trombatore del fuoco dello Spirito Santo, che chiunque vuole di questo sangue, vada per esso" (Letter 87, II, 73). Noffke places this letter to Giovanna dei Pazzi between November and December 1377. For a passage in which Jesus is the wine, the cask, and the cellarer, see Letter 136.

of the vineyard He has set the vase of the heart, full of blood, to water with it the plants that they may not be dried up.... By what is it watered? Not by water but with precious blood, spilled with such a fire of love, which blood remains in the vessel of the heart."²¹⁴

Contact with Christ's blood brings remission from sin: "The soul which has climbed there (to the cross), sees the goodness and power of the Father flow, through the strength of which He has given the power to the blood of the Son of God, to wash our sins."²¹⁵

The blood not only washes away sin but it also restores the original beauty and dignity of the soul: "In this blood you will find the fire of the divine charity. You will enjoy the beauty of the soul and its great dignity...in order that with His blood He might give us back the life and the beauty of the innocence because in the blood were washed and are washed the stains of our sins. Therefore you see that in the blood the beauty of the soul is found and enjoyed."²¹⁶

The fact that the Son of God has willingly shed His blood reassures the believer that God's action on her or his behalf will always be done for love: "So everything God did and has done to us, is done for love, and therefore the soul, which considers this boundless and ineffable love, opens the eye of the understanding and of knowledge in his object of the blood of Christ crucified. In this blood the generosity of the ineffable charity is more represented than in any other thing."²¹⁷

The blood shed at the crucifixion objectively manifests redemption but the blood also represents the redemption as it is given to individuals, washing away

²¹⁴ "Nel mezzo della vigna ha posto il vasello del cuore, pieno di sangue, per inaffiare con esso le piante, acciocchè non si secchino.... Di che s'innaffia? non d'acqua ma di sangue prezioso sparso con tanto fuoco d'amore, il quale sangue sta nel vasello del cuore" (Letter 313, V, 16, 21). This letter was sent as a reproach to the Count of Fondi, the protector of the dissident cardinals, at the beginning of the schism.

²¹⁵ "[C]he l'anima che ci è salita, vede versare la bontà e potenza del Padre, per la quale potenza ha data virtù al sangue del Figliuolo di Dio di lavare le nostre iniquità" (Letter 34, I, 129). Noffke dates this letter to the prior and brothers of Monte Oliveto between April 1 and 20, 1378.

²¹⁶ "[N]el quale sangue trovarai il fuoco della divina carità; gusterai la bellezza dell'anima e la grande dignità sua...che col sangue suo ci rendesse la vita e la bellezza dell'innocenza; perchè nel sangue si lavava e lavano le macchie de' difetti nostri. Adunque vedi che nel sangue si truova e gusta la bellezza dell'anima" (Letter 308, IV, 291). This letter was sent to Suor Daniella da Orvieto. Noffke dates this letter between December 20, 1378, and January 31, 1379.

²¹⁷ "Sicchè ogni cosa che Dio ha fatta e fa a noi, è fatta per amore; e però l'anima, che ragguarda questo smisurato e ineffabile amore, vi apre l'occhio dell'intelletto e del cognoscimento nel suo obietto del sangue di Cristo crocifisso, nel quale sangue se gli rappresenta più la larghezza dell'ineffabile carità, che in veruna altra cosa" (Letter 184, III, 116). Noffke dates this letter to the prior and members of the Compagnia della Vergine Maria near Holy Week, 1377.

sin and restoring the dignity of the soul. The blood is a continual invitation to experience God's love:

He cried on the cross, 'I thirst,' as if He might say, 'I have such a great thirst for your salvation that I am not able to satisfy it. Give me to drink.' The gentle Jesus asked to drink those whom He saw were not participating in the redemption of His blood....Then and now, continually He asks us for this drink and He shows continuous thirst.²¹⁸

Jesus' continual desire is that people share in the redemption provided by the blood.

The Blood Administered through the Church in the Sacraments

For Catherine, the blood that Jesus shed is transmitted principally through the Church. She emphasizes the role of the Church's ministers, particularly of the pope in this transmission. She also depicts the sacraments as specific means by which the believer encounters the blood shed on the cross.

The Blood in the Church

The Synoptic authors of the Gospels affirm that the wine given at the last supper was Jesus' blood. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says: "Drink of this, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Mt. 26:27-28, cf. Mk. 14:24, Lk. 22:20). In John's Gospel, Jesus states that believers will find intimacy with Him by drinking His blood: "He who drinks My blood, dwells in me and I in him" (Jn. 6:56).

Catherine considers not only the Eucharistic wine but all of the sacraments to be a sharing in the blood of Jesus. For her, the entire sacramental life of the Church is a communication of the blood from the cross to the souls of individuals. Other theologians, while not making explicit reference to the blood, also develop the relationship between the sacraments and the Passion. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, asserts: "It is manifest that, in a special way, the sacraments of the Church derive their power from the Passion of Christ, and that it is through the reception of the

²¹⁸ "[G]ridò in croce 'Sitio,' quasi dicesse: 'Io ò sì gran sete della vostra salute, ch' io non mi posso saziare. Datemi bere.' Dimandava el dolce Gesù di bere coloro ch' egli e' vedeva che non partecipavano la redentione del sangue suo.... Poi e ora, continuamente ci adimanda questo bere e dimostra continua sete" (Letter 12, I. 39). Catherine wrote this letter to Giovanni di Gano da Orvieto, abbot of the Williamite Abbey of Sant'Antimo. Noffke proposes that this letter was written between February and April 1376. For a similar passage on Jesus' hunger for the redemption of humanity, see Letter 242.

sacraments that the power flowing from this becomes, in a certain way, conjoined to us."²¹⁹

Catherine maintains the necessity of the Church, the spouse of Christ, to be the instrument through which the blood shed on the cross is now dispersed. She writes: "Through the wounds of the body of Christ crucified the blood came forth and poured out. And it is ministered to us by the ministers of the holy Church. I beg you, through the love of Christ crucified, that you receive the treasure of the blood, that was given you by the spouse of Christ."²²⁰

Catherine affirms that God's generosity with humanity has been manifested in three stages. The first was the original creation and the second was Jesus' presence with humanity in the Incarnation. The third stage is the ministry of the Church which Catherine often personifies in the pope. The pope is Christ's vicar, and is thus an instrument for the transmission of the graces needed for sanctification.²²¹ For Catherine, it is the pope, especially, who holds the keys to the blood.²²² Reverence is due to the pope not for himself, "but to the blood of Christ and to the authority

²¹⁹ "Unde manifestum est quod sacramenta Ecclesiae specialiter habent virtutem ex passione Christi, cujus virtus quodammodo nobis copulatur per susceptionem sacramentorum." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 62, 5, vol. 56, trans. David Bourke (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1975), 68-69. Also: "The Passion of Christ is the sufficient cause of man's salvation. Yet, it does not follow, on this account, that the sacraments are not necessary for man's salvation, for they produce their effects in virtue of the Passion of Christ and it is the Passion of Christ, which is, in a certain manner applied to men through the sacraments." "Passio Christi est causa sufficiens humanae salutis. Nec propter hoc sequitur quod sacramenta non sint necessaria ad humanam salutem: quia operantur in virtute passionis Christi et passio Christi quodammodo applicatur hominibus per sacramenta" (III, 61, 1, ad 3). *Ibid.*, 38-39.

²²⁰ "Per li forami del corpo di Cristo crocifisso esce e versa il sangue, ed ècci ministrato da' ministri della santa Chiesa. Priegovi, per l'amore di Cristo crocifisso, che voi riceviate il tesoro del sangue, el quale v'è dato dalla sposa di Cristo" (Letter 234, IV, 7). This letter was written to Buonaccorso di Lapo, a member of the Florentine Signoria. In this letter, Catherine expresses her disappointment at the disregard she received from the Florentine ambassadors. She had pleaded with Pope Gregory XI at Avignon for a reconciliation with the city at the request of some of the Florentine leaders. When the Florentine ambassadors arrived, they distanced themselves from her. Nevertheless, she continues to urge the Florentines to reconciliation. Noffke suggests that this letter was written between September 1 and 12, 1376, as the letter makes mention of the pope's intention to return to Rome.

²²¹ "Eternal God, through divine charity You made humanity and through love You united Yourself with us, and now You send Your vicar to administer to us the spiritual graces for our sanctification and the bringing back of Your lost children." "Dio eterno - il quale per divina carità sei fatto uomo e per amore sei unito con noi, e già ne mandi il tuo vicario ad amministrare a noi le grazie spirituali de la nostra santificazione e recuperazione de li figliuoli perduti" (*Oratio* III, 32). This prayer was made in October 1376, when Catherine was in Genoa.

²²² "To whom did He leave the keys of this blood? To the glorious apostle Peter and to all the others who came and will come. From now to the last day of judgment they have and they will have that same authority that Peter had." "A cui ne lassò le chiavi di questo sangue? Al glorioso apostolo

and dignity which God has given him for us."²²³ Even if the pope were diabolic, reverence would be due to him because of the blood.²²⁴

For Catherine, the blood cannot be dissociated from the Church: "The soul does not receive life in any other way except in this Church. This gentle Jesus...took for His spouse, the holy mother Church. There He put the fruit and the warmth of His blood, as a medicine for our sickness, that is, the sacraments of the Church, which have received life in the blood of the Son of God, which was spilled with such a fire of love."²²⁵

Catherine reminds her friends, who are tempted to support factions against the pope, of the close relationship of the blood, the sacraments, and the Church:

If you are against holy Church, how will you be able to participate in the blood of the Son of God, since the Church is not other than this Christ? He [the pope] is that one who gives and ministers the sacraments to us, which sacraments give us life, through the life that they have received from the blood of Christ. Because before the blood was given us, neither virtue nor any other thing was sufficient to give us eternal life.... How will you say to me that, if you offend a body, you do not offend

Pietro e a tutti gli altri che sono venuti o verranno: di qui a l'ultimo di del giudicio àno e avaranno quella medesima autorità che ebbe Pietro" (*Il Dialogo*, CXV, 322).

²²³ "In every way, whether he [the pope] might be good or bad, we ought not to withdraw from him by not rendering our debt because the reverence is not made to him in himself but to the blood of Christ and to the authority and dignity which God has given him for us. This authority and dignity are not diminished through any defect which might be in him." "[P]erocchè in ogni modo, o buono o cattivo che egli si fosse, noi non doviamo ritrarre adietro di non rendere 'l debito nostro; però che la riverenza non si fa a lui in quanto lui, ma al sangue di Cristo, e alla autorità e dignità che Dio gli ha data per noi. Questa autorità e dignità non diminuiscono per neuno suo difetto che in lui fusse" (Letter 311, V, 5). This was sent to the Signori Difensori, the leaders of the city of Siena. Noffke dates this letter between October 1 and November 10, 1379.

²²⁴ "Even if he were the devil incarnate, I ought not to raise my head against him, but always humble myself, and ask the blood for mercy because in another way you are not able to have it nor to share the fruit of the blood." "Etiandio se fusse dimonio incarnato, io non debbo alzare il capo contra lui, ma sempre umiliarmi, e chiedere el sangue per misericordia: chè in altro modo no 'l potete avere, nè partecipare il frutto del sangue" (Letter 28, I, 98). This letter was addressed to Bernabò Visconti. Noffke places it between June 7 and July 24, 1375.

²²⁵ "In altro non riceve l'anima vita se none in essa Chiesa. Questo dolce Gesù...e prese per sposa la santa madre Ecclesia. Ine misse el frutto e 'l caldo del sangue suo, quasi per medicina delle nostre infermità: ciò sono e' sacramenti della Chiesa, che àno ricevuta vita nel sangue del Figliuolo di Dio, el quale fu sparto con tanto fuoco d'amore" (Letter 168, III, 54). Noffke suggests that this letter was written shortly after January 14 and before early March 1376. In this letter Catherine pleads with the elders of Lucca not to join Florence and Milan against the pope. For Catherine, membership in the Church and obedience to the Church are the only way to share in the blood. For Catherine's opinion on obedience to the Church as the way to share in the blood, see Letter 282.

the blood which is in the body? Do you not know that there is one mystic body which holds in itself the blood of Christ?²²⁶

Since the Church administers the blood to humanity, the Father, in *Il Dialogo*, speaks of the Church as a wine cellar: "You know that I set for you the mystic body of the holy Church as if in the form of a wine cellar. In this cellar was the blood of My only-begotten Son. In this blood all the sacraments have value and they have life in the power of this blood. At the door of this cellar was Christ on earth, who was commissioned by Him to administer the blood."²²⁷

Using this image of the wine cellar, she impresses upon Pope Gregory XI his responsibility for the Church: "You are the doorkeepers of the cellar of God, that is, of the blood of His only begotten Son, whose vicar you represent on earth. Through other hands the Blood of Christ cannot be had if not through yours. You feed and nourish faithful Christians. You are that mother who nourishes us at the breasts of divine charity. For you do not give us blood without fire nor fire without blood. For the blood was shed with a fire of love."²²⁸

²²⁶ "Se tu se' contra la santa Chiesa, come potrai partecipare el sangue del Figliuolo di Dio, chè la Chiesa non è altro che esso Cristo? Egli è colui che ci dona e ministra e' sacramenti, e' quali sacramenti ci danno vita, per la vita che ànno ricevuta dal sangue di Cristo. Chè prima che 'l sangue ci fusse dato, nè virtù nè altro erano sufficienti a darci vita eterna.... Come mi dirai tu che, se tu offendi uno corpo, che tu non offendi el sangue che è nel corpo? Non sai tu che egli è uno corpo mistico, che tiene in sè el sangue di Cristo?" (Letter 171, III, 68). Catherine sent this letter to her friend, Nicolò Soderini, a member of the Signoria of Florence, urging him not to support the league against the pope. Noffke places this letter in late February 1376. Noffke points out the particular meaning of Catherine's "Mystic body": "The sense is not parallel to the present understanding of 'Mystical Body.' In Catherine, *il corpo mistico* embraces every aspect of the sacramental life at the heart of the Church." Suzanne Noffke, O.P., in *The Dialogue*, 36, n.15. Catherine frequently describes the ministers of the sacraments as the Mystic Body of Christ. Thus she writes: "You are in the universal body, and these are in the mystic body, placed to nourish your souls, ministering to you the blood in the sacraments which you receive from them, and drawing out the thorns of mortal sin in you and planting grace for you." "Voi sete nel corpo universale, ed essi sono nel corpo mistico, posti a pascere l'anime vostre ministrandovi il sangue ne' sacramenti che ricevete da lei, traendone essi le spine de' peccati mortali e piantandovi la grazia" (*Il Dialogo* XXIII, 63). At times she seems to use the expression in a more encompassing sense, for instance: "I wish then that you may be true workers, who with much eagerness help to form the souls in the mystic body of Christ." "Voglio dunque che siate lavoratori veri, che con molta sollicitudine aiutate a lavorare l'anime nel corpo mistico della santa Chiesa" (*Il Dialogo*, XXIV, 67).

²²⁷ "[S]ai ch' Io ti posi il corpo mistico della santa Chiesa quasi in forma d'uno cellaio, nel quale cellaio era il sangue de l'unigenito mio Figliuolo, nel quale sangue vagliono tutti i sacramenti, e ànno vita in virtù di questo sangue. A la porta di questo cellaio era Cristo in terra, a cui era commesso a ministrare il sangue" (*Il Dialogo*, CXV, 323).

²²⁸ "Portinai sete del cellaio di Dio, cioè del sangue dell'unigenito suo Figliuolo, la cui vece rappresentate in terra; e per altre mani non si può avere il sangue di Cristo se non per le vostre. Voi pascete e nutocate li fedeli Cristiani: voi sete quella madre che alle mammelle della divina carità ci

All of the Church's ministers are so identified with Christ that Catherine depicts the Father speaking of "the dignity that I have given them making them My *christs*."²²⁹ The ministers of the sacraments are those who hold the keys to the cellar: "They are the laborers who hold the keys of the wine, that is, of the blood, flowing from this vine."²³⁰ As can be seen in *Il Dialogo*, Catherine is very aware of the deficiencies of the clergy, yet she asserts that the defects of the ministers do not diminish the power of the blood.²³¹

The Sacraments Transmit the Blood to the Believer

Paul emphasizes the relationship between baptism and Jesus' death: "When we were baptized into Christ Jesus, we were baptized into His death" (Rom. 6:3). Catherine explicitly identifies the efficacy of baptism in the soul with the blood shed on the cross: "With the fire of His charity He purified her [the soul] from the fault, washing her in the water of holy baptism, which baptism has value for us by the power of the blood."²³² Through baptism in the blood one shares in God's life: "Through that blood you had life in holy baptism."²³³

Associating baptism with the water that flowed from Jesus' side, Catherine attributes the sacrament's effects to the blood: "You know that He poured out blood and water. The water was given to Christians through holy baptism, which gives us the life and the form of grace. Through the merits of the blood of the Lamb, the divine eternal goodness provides a remedy for our ignorance and misery."²³⁴ Cather-

notricate; perocchè non ci date sangue senza fuoco, nè fuoco senza sangue. Perocchè il sangue fu sparto con fuoco d'amore" (Letter 270, IV, 153). Noffke dates this letter April 16, 1377.

²²⁹ "[L]a dignità ch'lo l'avevo data avendoli fatti miei cristi" (*Il Dialogo*, CXV, 321).

²³⁰ "I quali sono lavoratori che tengono le chiavi del vino, cioè del sangue, escito di questa vite" (*Il Dialogo*, XXIV, 67).

²³¹ "This blood is itself made with such perfection that the fruit of this blood is not able to be taken from you through any defect of the minister." "Il quale sangue è sì fatto e di tanta perfezione, che per veruno difetto del ministro non vi può essere tolto il frutto d'esso sangue" (*Il Dialogo*, XXIV, 67).

²³² "[O]nde col fuoco della sua carità la purificò della colpa, lavandola nell'acqua del santo battesimo, il quale battesimo vale a noi in virtù del sangue" (Letter 81, II, 41). Noffke believes that this letter was written between January 1 and March 31, 1378, to Francesca di Francesco di Tolomei, a nun,

²³³ "[P]er lo qual sangue aveste vita nel santo baptesmo" (*Il Dialogo*, XXIII, 63).

²³⁴ "Sapete che elli gittò sangue e acqua. L'acqua, per lo battesimo santo che è dato a' cristiani, el quale ci dà la vita e la forma della gratia, e per li meriti del sangue dell'agnello providde la divina eterna bontà, per remedio delle nostre ignorantie e miserie" (Letter 189, III, 137). Noffke suggests that this letter to two different monasteries was written in early April 1376.

ine observes that baptism removes sin but leaves a certain residue which is the inclination to sin, which can be overcome with the help of grace.²³⁵

Catherine maintains that even the unbaptized have been purchased with the precious blood as she addresses Consiglio, a Jewish man from Padua, with the words: "Most loved and most dear brother, bought back in the precious blood of the Son of God as I am."²³⁶ Catherine considers Consiglio's relationship to God to be established by the precious blood that Jesus shed for him. Consiglio has the possibility of being a member of the body but, without baptism, this potential cannot be realized. She explains: "You ought to be converted and receive the grace of holy baptism, for being without baptism you are not able to have the grace of God. Whoever is without baptism does not participate in the fruit of holy Church but, as a rotten member, cut from the gathering of faithful Christians, he passes from bodily death to eternal death."²³⁷ Thus, the blood that was shed for all is personally applied to those who will accept it in the sacrament of baptism. In the sacrament, the individual is incorporated into the body of those who, by grace, may enter into eternal life, the purpose for which they were created.

²³⁵ "Only the trace of original sin remained, which sin you contracted from your father and mother when you were conceived by them. This trace is removed from the soul, almost completely. And this is done in holy baptism. This baptism has power and gives the life of grace in the power of this glorious and precious blood. As soon as the soul has received holy baptism, original sin is removed and grace is infused into it. And the inclination to sin, which is the trace that remains from original sin, as was said, weakens. And the soul is able to constrain it if she wills." "Solo el segno rimase del peccato originale, il quale peccato contraete dal padre e dalla madre quando sete concepiti da loro. Il quale segno si tolle dell'anima, bene che non a tutto, e questo si fa nel santo battesimo, il quale battesimo à virtù e dà vita di grazia in virtù di questo glorioso e prezioso sangue. Subito che l'anima à ricevuto el santo battesimo l'è tolto il peccato originale, e le è infusa la grazia. E lo inchinamento al peccato, che è la margine che rimane del peccato originale, come detto è, indebilisce, e può l'anima rifrenarlo se ella vuole" (*Il Dialogo*, XIV, 49-50). A reference that original sin is transmitted at conception is: "Washing the stain of original sin in which you were conceived, contracting it from your father and from your mother." "Lavando la macchia del peccato originale nel quale sete concepiti, contraendolo dal padre e da la madre vostra" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXV, 433).

²³⁶ "Dilettissimo e carissimo fratello, ricomprato del prezioso sangue del Figliuolo di Dio come io" (Letter 15, I, 49). Noffke suggests that this letter was written between late January and early May 1376. Catherine, in a letter to Bartolomeo Smeducci, proposes a crusade not only to win back the holy places but also to win the souls of the Moslems, "the souls of the unbelievers, who are our brothers, redeemed in Christ's blood as we are." "l'anime degli infedeli, che sono nostri fratelli, ricomperati del sangue di Cristo come noi" (Letter 374, VI, 25-26). This letter is Gardner I.

²³⁷ "[D]oviatevi ridurre e ricevere la grazia del santo battesimo, essendo che senza el battesimo non potete avere la grazia di Dio. Chi è senza il battesimo non participa el frutto de la Chiesa santa, ma come membro putrido, tagliato da la congregazione de' fedeli cristiani, passa de la morte corporale a la morte eternale" (Letter 15, I, 49-50).

Catherine, likewise, develops the relationship of the Eucharist to the blood. She describes the Church as a shop set on a bridge, similar to those she had seen in Florence. This shop offers the body and blood of Jesus: "So, you see that the bridge is walled and is covered with mercy. And on it is the shop of the garden of holy Church, that keeps and ministers the bread of life and gives the blood to be drunk, in order that the journeying pilgrims, My creatures, being tired, may not faint on the way. And for this My charity has ordered that the blood and body of My only-begotten Son, wholly God and wholly human, may be ministered to you."²³⁸

Catherine relates the once visible blood of Jesus to the blood given in the Eucharist:

This charity is made visible to you through My visible only-begotten Son, having shown it with His blood. That blood inebriates the soul and clothes it with the fire of the divine charity, and gives it the food of the sacrament. This is placed for you in the store of the mystic body of the holy Church, that is, the body and blood of My Son, wholly God and wholly Man, given it to minister through the hands of My vicar, who holds the key of this blood.²³⁹

As already seen in Catherine's images of the Passion, Catherine's teachings on the Eucharist most frequently center on the sacrament's loving effects on humanity. In the sacraments, God is serving humanity. The Eucharistic food, the Body and Blood of Jesus, is given to those who are pilgrims to strengthen them on their way,

²³⁸ "Si che vedi che il ponte è murato ed è ricuperto con la misericordia, e su v'è la bottiga del giardino della santa Chiesa, la quale tiene e ministra il pane della vita e dà bere il sangue, acciò che i viandanti peregrini delle mie creature, stanchi, non vengano meno della via. E per questo à ordinato la mia carità che vi sia ministrato il sangue e 'l corpo de l'unigenito mio Figliuolo, tutto Dio e tutto uomo" (*Il Dialogo*, XXVII, 73-74). Some Eucharistic developments transpired in the Church during the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries that may have affected Catherine. The Eucharistic teaching on the Transubstantiation was specified and the obligation to receive communion annually was stated at the Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215. The feast of Corpus Domini was introduced in 1264. The thirteenth century witnessed a fascination with Eucharistic miracles in which blood flowed from consecrated hosts, especially at Bolsena in 1263. See Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R., and James Monti, *In the Presence of Our Lord: The History, Theology and Psychology of Eucharistic Devotion* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1996). Even as the Real Presence in the Eucharist was emphasized, the administering of the precious blood to the faithful had begun to be restricted in the twelfth century. This restriction became the universal law in 1414.

²³⁹ "[L]a quale carità v'è fatta visibile per lo visibile unigenito mio Figliuolo, avendola mostrata col sangue suo. Il quale sangue inebria l'anima e vestela del fuoco della divina carità, e dàlle il cibo del sacramento, il quale v'ò posto nella bottiga del corpo mistico della santa Chiesa, cioè il corpo e 'l sangue del mio Figliuolo, tutto Dio e tutto uomo, datolo a ministrare per le mani del vicario mio, il quale tiene la chiave di questo sangue" (*Il Dialogo* LXVI, 167-168). For a reference to the Eucharist as a work of God's mercy, see *Il Dialogo*, XXX.

“that you may not lose the memory of the blessing of the blood shed for you with such a fire of love.”²⁴⁰

For Catherine, the three powers of the soul, memory, understanding, and will, are the means by which one comes to know God’s goodness within oneself. Not only the actual reception of the Blood in the Eucharist but also the memory of such a gift inspires one to love God with more intensity. Jesus’ body is the soul’s food,²⁴¹ given “that you may have refreshment and not lose the memory of the blessing of

²⁴⁰ “E perchè non perdiate la memoria del beneficio del sangue sparto per voi con tanto fuoco d’amore” (*Il Dialogo*, LXXVIII, 206). In this passage from *Il Dialogo*, Catherine presents the entire Trinity’s involvement in the Eucharistic mystery: “So they have found rest in the teaching of My Truth. They have found the table, the food, and the waiter. They taste this food by means of the doctrine of Christ crucified, My only-begotten Son. I am the bed and table for them. This gentle and loving Word is the food for them. For they taste the food of souls in this glorious Word, and He is the food given by Me to you, His body and His blood, wholly God and wholly human. You receive this in the sacrament of the altar, set and given to you by My goodness, while you are pilgrims and wayfarers in order that you do not faint nor weaken, and that you may not lose the memory of the blood shed for you with such a fire of love, but that you always may be encouraged and delight in your going. The Holy Spirit serves them, that is, the affection of My charity, which charity serves them the gifts and graces. This gentle waiter carries and brings, and carries and offers to Me their gentle and loving desires and brings to them from their toils, the fruit of the divine charity in their souls, tasting and being nourished with the sweetness of My charity. So you see that I am the table and My Son is the food, and the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from Me, the Father, and from the Son, serves them.” “Unde anno trovato il riposo nella dottrina della mia Verità; anno trovato la mensa, il cibo e il servidore, il quale cibo gustano col mezzo della dottrina di Cristo crocifisso, unigenito mio Figliuolo. Io lo’ so’ letto e mensa. Questo dolce e amoroso Verbo l’è cibo, si perchè gustano il cibo dell’anime in questo glorioso Verbo, e si perchè egli è cibo dato da me a voi: la carne e ’l sangue suo, tutto Dio e tutto uomo, il quale ricevete nel sacramento dell’altare, posto e dato a voi dalla mia bontà, mentre che sete pellegrini e viandanti, acciò che non veniate meno ne l’andare per debilezza, e perchè non perdiate la memoria del beneficio del sangue sparto per voi con tanto fuoco d’amore, ma perchè sempre vi confortiate e diletiate nel vostro andare. Lo Spirito santo gli serve, cioè l’affetto della mia carità, la quale carità lo’ ministra i doni e le grazie. Questo dolce servitore porta e arrega: arrega e offera a me i dolci e amorosi desiderî loro, e porta a loro il frutto della divina carità, delle loro fadighe, nell’anima loro, gustando e nutricandosi della dolcezza della mia carità. Si che vedi che Io lo’ so’ mensa, il Figliuolo mio l’è cibo, e lo Spirito santo gli serve, che procede da me Padre e dal Figliuolo” (*Il Dialogo*, LXXVIII, 206).

²⁴¹ “There you will find the food, because you see well that He has given you His flesh in food and His blood in drink, roasted upon the cross of the fire of charity, and served upon the table of the altar, wholly God and wholly Man.” “Ine troverai il cibo; perocchè vedi bene che egli ti ha data la carne in cibo, e ’l sangue in beveraggio, arrostita in su la croce al fuoco della carità, e ministrato in su la mensa dell’altare, tutto Dio e tutto Uomo” (Letter 47, I, 183). Noffke dates this letter around between January 1 and 20, 1378. Pietro di Giovanni Venture, a young Siense man, became one of Catherine’s disciples during their first meeting when she disclosed to him how long it had been since his last confession and the reason he had stayed away.

the blood."²⁴² In the Eucharist, the person is intimately united with God, as the Father explains to Catherine: "Receiving this sacrament she stays in Me and I in her, just as the fish stays in the sea and the sea in the fish, so I stay in the soul and the soul in Me, the peaceful sea."²⁴³

Jesus' salvific actions are made effective for those who confess their sins in the sacrament of penance:

As much as a person offends, and turns to the blood of Christ with sorrow and bitterness for his sin, so much does he receive mercy, the blood being ministered to us with holy confession. For, vomiting the rottenness of our wickedness by way of the mouth, that is, our confessing well and diligently to the priest, then he, absolving us, gives us the blood of Christ. And in the blood is washed the leprosy of the sins and of the defects which are in us.²⁴⁴

Catherine stresses the relation between the blood and the sacrament of reconciliation: "In the blood you will find the fire of love. In the blood our iniquity is washed. This the vicar of Christ does when he absolves our soul as we confess. He does nothing other than splash the blood of Christ upon our head."²⁴⁵ Catherine depicts the blood literally being poured over the penitent: "This blood the priest pours in absolution over the face of the soul."²⁴⁶

The reception of this sacrament acts as a continuous healing: "Therefore He has this remedy of holy confession, which has value only in the blood of the lamb. And He gives it not once or twice, but continually."²⁴⁷ Catherine reminds the prison-

²⁴² "[A]ccìò che aviate refrigerio e non perdiate la memoria del beneficio del sangue" (*Il Dialogo*, CXII, 318). For a fuller reference to the Eucharist as food given by God's generosity, see Letter 129.

²⁴³ "Ricevendo questo sacramento sta in me e Io in lei; si come il pescie sta nel mare e 'l mare nel pescie, così Io sto ne l'anima e l'anima in me, mare pacifico" (*Il Dialogo*, CXII, 317).

²⁴⁴ "Però che tanto, quanto l'uomo offende, ed elli torna al sangue di Cristo con dolore e amaritudine della sua colpa, tanto riceve misericordia, essendoci ministrato il sangue con la santa confessione. Perocchè, vomitando il fracidume delle nostre iniquità con la bocca, cioè confessandoci bene, diligentemente al sacerdote, egli allora assolvendoci, ci dona il sangue di Cristo e nel sangue si lava la lebbra de' peccati e delli difetti che sono in noi" (Letter 254, IV, 78). This letter was sent to Pietro di Iacomo Attacusi de' Tolomei. Noffke places this letter in late January 1377. For another reference to the sacrament of penance, see Letter 276.

²⁴⁵ "Nel sangue troverete il fuoco dell'amore; nel sangue si lavano le nostre iniquità. Questo fa il vicario di Cristo, quando assolve l'anima nostra, confessandoci noi: non fa altro, se non che getta il sangue di Cristo sopra il capo nostro" (Letter 155, III, 15). Through this letter, Catherine urges Niera Gambacorti in Pisa to encourage her husband, Gherardo, to confess his sins. Noffke locates this letter early in 1377, although it might be later. For another reference to the pope's ministry of Reconciliation, see *Oratio* III.

²⁴⁶ "Il quale sangue il sacerdote gitta nella assoluzione sopra la faccia dell'anima" (*Il Dialogo*, LXXXV, 193).

²⁴⁷ "E però à posto questo remedio della santa confessione, la quale vale solo per lo sangue dell'agnello. Non ve la dà una volta, nè due, ma continuamente" (Letter 28, I, 97-98).

ers of Siena that Jesus' blood is available to them through this sacrament: "All these sins and these evils are quenched in the blood of Christ crucified, because in the blood the soul is washed from its impurities, bringing itself back by holy confession."²⁴⁸ She also maintains that the fruit of the blood is still available for those who are unable to reach the sacrament by approaching God with the disposition of sorrow and confidence.²⁴⁹

Catherine explains to Gregory XI that the sacraments conform their recipients to God's truth, the purpose for which God created them:

This is the truth, that He created us that we might participate with Him and enjoy His eternal and supreme good. What has declared and shown this truth? The blood of the humble and immaculate Lamb of whom you are made the vicar and cellarer, who holds the keys of the blood, in which blood we were recreated to grace. And every day as the person leaves the fault of deadly sin and receives the blood with holy confession, it can be said that he is reborn anew each time. And so we find continually that the truth is shown to us in the blood, receiving the fruit of the blood.²⁵⁰

While teaching the power of the blood in the sacraments, Catherine is also insistent that the sacraments demand a response: "Unless we put on a garment of love for the eternal Bridegroom, knowing His inestimable charity, we would be able to say that this grace, which we have received in baptism, would be naked."²⁵¹ Catherine warns that unless a person is receptive he or she does not receive the fruit

²⁴⁸ "Tutti questi difetti e questi mali sono spenti nel sangue di Cristo crocifisso, perchè nel sangue si lava l'anima dalle immondizie sue, riducendosi alla santa confessione" (Letter 260, IV, 111).

²⁴⁹ "Not being able to confess, contrition of the heart is enough. Then the hand of My mercy gives you the fruit of this precious blood. But being able to confess, I wish that you may have it. And whoever will be able to confess and will not come, will be deprived of the fruit of the blood." "E non potendo avere la confessione basta la contrizione del cuore. Allora la mano della mia clemenzia vi dona il frutto di questo prezioso sangue, ma potendo avere la confessione voglio che l'abbiate; e chi la potrà avere e non la vorrà, sarà privato del frutto del sangue" (*Il Dialogo*, LXXV, 193-194).

²⁵⁰ "Questa è la verità; che ci creò perchè noi partecipassimo di lui, e godessimo il suo eterno e sommo bene. Chi ci ha dichiarata e manifestata questa verità? Il sangue dell'umile e immacolato Agnello di cui sete fatto vicario e celleraio; che tenete le chiavi del sangue, nel quale sangue fummo recreati a Grazia; e ogni di che l'uomo esce dalla colpa del peccato mortale, e riceve il sangue della santa confessione, si può dire che ogni volta rinasca di nuovo. E così troviamo continuamente che la verità ci è manifestata nel sangue, ricevendo il frutto del sangue" (Letter 305, IV, 277-278). Noffke dates this letter September 18, 1378. Other references to the pope as Vicar of Christ holding the keys to the blood can be found in Letters 291, 339, and 362.

²⁵¹ "Se non ci è posto uno vestimento d'amore inverso lo Sposo Eterno, cognoscendo la sua inestimabile carità, potremmo dire che questa Grazia che noi abbiamo ricevuta nel Battesimo, fusse nuda" (Letter 220, III, 271). Noffke sets this letter between September and October 1377.

of the blood: "First you must raise yourself with contrition of heart, contempt of sin, and love of virtue. And then you will receive the fruit of that blood."²⁵²

She believes that unless one accepts the blood with "desire" the sacraments would have little effect. So important is the "desire" to the sacrament, that Catherine suggests one can receive the fruits of the sacrament virtually by means of desire, even at times, without the actual sacrament. This "holy desire" means virtually communicating "through the desire for communion and through the consideration of the blood of Christ crucified...because one sees that through love it was poured out."²⁵³

The efficacy of the Eucharist is increased or lessened by the disposition of the recipient: "This food strengthens a little or a lot according to the desire of him who takes it."²⁵⁴ The sacrament's effects are proportionate to the spiritual hunger of the person: "The food satisfies every hungry person who delights in this bread, but not that one who is not hungry, because it is a food that wants to be taken with the mouth of holy desire and tasted through love."²⁵⁵

Thus, for Catherine, the effects of Jesus' redemptive actions are transmitted to individuals through the Church by means of the sacraments. Catherine describes this transmission through the symbol of Jesus' blood. The Church is the wine cellar of the blood and the pope and the Church's ministers, who administer the sacraments, hold the keys to the blood. While the blood is supremely powerful, its efficacy is dependent on the receptivity of the recipient.

The Disposition to Receive the Blood

While one encounters the blood through the sacraments and through the Church, that encounter is fed by and feeds the individual's interior openness to Jesus. Catherine insists that while Jesus gave Himself to death for the whole of humanity, the love shown on the cross needs to be accepted by each person. This disposition to receive the fruit of the blood is based on an awareness of Jesus' desire to give Himself as well as a belief in the immense mercy that Jesus offers.

²⁵² "Conviensi dunque che prima vi leviate con la contrizione del cuore, dispiacimento del peccato e amore della virtù, e allora riceverete il frutto d'esso sangue" (*Il Dialogo*, XXIII, 64).

²⁵³ "[V]irtualmente è comunicandosi per santo desiderio: si per desiderio della comunione e si per considerazione del sangue di Cristo crocifisso...perchè per amore vede che fu sparto" (*Il Dialogo*, LXVI, 168).

²⁵⁴ "Questo cibo conforta poco e assai, secondo il desiderio di colui che 'l piglia" (*Il Dialogo*, LXVI, 168).

²⁵⁵ "Cibo che sazia ogni affamato che di questo pane si diletta, ma non colui che non à fame; però che egli è uno cibo che vuole essere preso con la bocca del santo desiderio e gustato per amore" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXV, 433).

Acceptance of the Love in the Blood, the Open Side and the Heart

Jesus' actions invite a personal response. She describes the Passion in very personal terms: "He has lowered His head to greet you. He has the crown on His head to adorn you. His arms are stretched out to embrace you, and His feet are nailed to stay with you."²⁵⁶ This personal approach is characteristic of Catherine's writing on the Passion. She inserts herself into the very scene of the Passion: "If I look well, supreme and eternal Truth, I am the thief and You were hung for me, as I see the Word, Your Son, fixed and nailed on the cross."²⁵⁷

Catherine seeks to arouse in her readers and listeners an appreciation for the intensity of God's love for them, demonstrated in Jesus' Passion and death. To animate the desire for Christ, she habitually draws attention to the evident physical signs of Jesus' love: the blood, the open side, and the heart. These signs also symbolize the grace of Christ that is present and available to the believer.

Catherine repeatedly appeals to the blood as the proof of His love: "In this blood one knows the fire and the abyss of His charity, through which knowledge the soul comes to love because in another way he would not come to it. For the creature loves his Creator as much as he considers himself to be loved by Him. So all the coldness of our heart does not proceed from any other cause, save that we do not consider how much we are loved by God."²⁵⁸

The Passion is the cause of confidence in God's love: "The affection of the soul which goes after the understanding...has understood the object of Christ crucified, the abyss of the fire of His charity, which she knew in this Word, because through this means the love that God has for us was manifested to us."²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ "Egli à il capo chinato per te salutare, la corona in capo per te ornare, le braccia stese per te abbracciare, i piedi confitti per teco stare" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXVIII, 387).

²⁵⁷ "Se io veggo bene, somma ed eterna Verità, io so' il ladro e tu se' lo 'mpiccato per me, perché veggo il Verbo tuo Figliuolo confitto e chiavellato in croce" (*Il Dialogo*, XXV, 68). For Catherine's words on the responsibility of the believer to ponder God's love, see Letter 29 and Letter 133.

²⁵⁸ "Nel qual sangue cognosce il fuoco e l'abisso della sua carità; per lo quale cognoscimento l'anima viene ad amare, chè in altro modo non vi verrebbe. Però che tanto ama la creatura il suo creatore, quanto ragguarda sè essere amato da lui. Onde tutta la freddezza del cuore nostro non procede da altro, se non perchè noi non ragguardiamo quanto noi siamo amati da Dio" (Letter 279, IV, 189). This letter was sent to Ristoro Canigiani, a disciple in Florence. Noffke estimates that this letter was written between September 15 and October 15 of 1378. For other references to the believer's need to reflect on how much he or she is loved, see *Oratio* XII, Letter 32, Letter 40, Letter 47, Letter 77, Letter 95, and Gardner III (Misciattelli, XI).

²⁵⁹ "L'affetto dell'anima che va dietro all'intelletto...ha conosciuto l'obietto di Cristo crocifisso, l'abisso del fuoco della sua carità, il quale cognobbe in questo Verbo perocchè per questo mezzo ci è manifestato l'amore che Dio ci ha" (Letter 113, II, 171). This letter was sent to Countess Bandedga Salimbeni. Noffke dates this letter between November and December 1377.

Catherine maintains that the cleansing power of the blood cannot be effective unless the person accepts it: "Although the blood and the fire of divine love are given us (and this blood and fire is given to everyone for our redemption), nevertheless, it is not shared in by all; and this is not the defect of the blood, nor of the fire, nor of First Gentle Truth, Who has given it to us, but it is the defect of the one who does not empty the vessel to be able to be filled with His blood."²⁶⁰

The blood has the potential to renew the relationship of the individual with God and to cleanse sins, but if the soul does not recognize the love that is being offered, then the blood is not able to be effective:

But this blood would not therefore give us life nor would it wash the face of the soul, if the soul with the memory of the blood, recalling the fire of the divine charity, did not exercise its life. It is not through any defect of the blood, but of our own that do we not receive the fruit of the blood, that is, not exercising the affection of the charity which one finds in the blood. This charity gives us, who receive it, the fruit of grace.²⁶¹

The appreciation of God's love is formed by meditating on the blood: "But where will you find this love? In the blood of the humble and spotless Lamb, who, to wash the face of His spouse, ran to the shameful death of the cross.... All this was done for love. Then see that the blood shows you the love God has for you."²⁶²

The love that Jesus displayed on the cross continues into the present time: "The desire for your salvation did not end but the pain ended. For if the affection of My charity, which I showed you by means of Him, were then ended and finished in you, you would not be. For you were made through love. And if I withdrew love

²⁶⁰ "Poniamochè 'l sangue e il fuoco del divino amore ci sia dato (e a tutti è dato questo sangue e fuoco per nostra redenzione); e nondimeno da tutti non è participato: e questo non è per difetto del sangue, nè del fuoco, nè della prima dolce Verità che ce l'ha donato; ma è difetto di chi non vota il vasello per poterlo empire d'esso sangue" (Letter 80, II, 36). This letter was sent to the Augustinian, Giovanni Tantucci. Noffke dates this letter between May 22 and 31, 1378.

²⁶¹ "Ma non ci darebbe però questo sangue vita, nè laverebbe la faccia dell'anima, se l'anima colla memoria del sangue, ripensando il fuoco della divina carità, non esercitasse la vita sua. Non per difetto del sangue, ma di noi, che non riceviamo il frutto del sangue: cioè non esercitando l'affetto della carità, che truova nel sangue: la quale carità, ricevendola, ci dà frutto di Grazia" (Letter 331, V, 88). Catherine wrote this letter to the Carthusian monk, Pietro da Milano. According to Noffke this letter was written between December 15 and 31, 1378, after the beginning of the schism.

²⁶² "Ma dove troverai questo amore? Nel sangue dell'umile e immacolato Agnello, il quale per lavare la faccia della sposa sua, corse all'obbrobriosa morte della croce.... Tutto questo fu fatto per amore. Adunque vedi che 'l sangue ti manifesta l'amore che Dio t' ha" (Letter 81, II, 41). This letter is written to Francesca di Tolomei, who had become a Dominican nun with Catherine's encouragement. Noffke places the time of this letter between January 1 and March 31, 1378. For other references to the blood, see Letter 96, Letter 287, and Letter 307.

to Myself, that I did not love your being, you would not be."²⁶³ Recognizing the love of God in the blood, one begins to love God:

Because in the blood of Christ one sees the ineffable love which God has for him, since the blood reveals to us the love and the charity of God more manifestly than any other thing, at once one opens oneself to love Him with all his heart, with all his affection and with all his strength. For the condition of love is to love as much as one feels loved and to love all those things that [the beloved] loves who loves him.²⁶⁴

Catherine insists that one comes to appreciate God's love only by fixing one's eyes on the crucified Christ:

I wish...that you open the eye of the understanding to know the love that God has for you. For through love, God gave you the Word, his only-begotten Son. And the Son has given you His life with such a fire of love and He has slain His body, washing us in His blood. We, ignorant and miserable, do not know nor love so great a gift! But all this is because the eye is closed, for if it were open and had placed Christ crucified as an object, it would not be ignorant and ungrateful to such a grace. And therefore I speak to you that you may keep this eye always open. Make it firm and set on the consumed and slain Lamb in order that ignorance may never fall on you.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ "[N]on terminò il desiderio della salute vostra, ma la pena. Che se l'affetto della mia carità, la quale per mezzo di lui vi dimostrai, fosse allora terminata e finita in voi, voi non sareste, perchè siete fatti per amore; e se l'amore fosse ritratto a me, che Io non amasse l'essere vostro, voi non sareste" (*Il Dialogo*, LXXXII, 215-216).

²⁶⁴ "E perchè nel sangue di Cristo vede l'amore ineffabile che Dio gli ha (perchè più manifestamente il sangue ci ha manifestato l'amore e la carità di Dio, che niuna altra cosa); distendosi subito ad amarlo con tutto il cuore, con tutto l'affetto e con tutte le forze sue. Perocchè condizione è dell'amore, d'amare quanto si sente amare, d'amare tutte le cose che ama colui ch' egli ama" (Letter 299, IV, 258). This letter was sent to Misser Ristoro Canigiani. Noffke locates this letter between June 25 and July 15, 1378. For another reference to the blood as the source of love, see Letter 297.

²⁶⁵ "[V]oglio...che l'apriate l'occhio dell'intelletto a cognoscere l'amore che Dio v'à, chè per amore v'à dato el verbo dell'unigenito suo Figliuolo, e il Figliuolo v'à data la vita con tanto fuoco d'amore, e à svenato el corpo suo, facendoci bagno del sangue. Ignoranti e miserabili noi, che non conosciamo nè amiamo tanto benefitio! Ma tutto questo è perchè l'occhio è serrato, chè, se fusse aperto e avessesi posto per oggetto Cristo crucifisso, non sarebbe ignorante nè ingrato a tanta gratia. E però vi dico che sempre apriate questo occhio: fermatelo e stabilitelo nel consumato e svenato agnello, acciò che ignorantia non caggia mai in voi" (Letter 247, IV, 57-58). Noffke suggests around November 15, 1376, as the date of this letter, which was addressed to Monna Giovanna di Corrado Maconi, a member of one of Siena's lesser noble families. Monna Giovanna sent her son, Stefano, to obtain Catherine's assistance in healing a feud between the Maconi and Tolomei families. As a result of this meeting, Stefano became one of Catherine's followers and often served as her secretary. Catherine took Stefano as part of her company to Avignon. This letter was written in response to Monna Giovanna's complaints about Stefano's delay in returning from Avignon.

In keeping with Catherine's teachings on self-knowledge, she discloses that the blood is not a distant reality but can be found by looking within oneself: "You will know the blood in the knowledge of yourself, because He washes the face of the soul with blood, and the blood is ours.... Fill yourself with the blood of Christ crucified as a vessel."²⁶⁶

One comprehends the significance of the blood through self-knowledge: "Where do we find this blood? In the knowledge of ourselves."²⁶⁷ This knowledge of oneself includes knowledge of one's frailty and dependence on God as a creature, an awareness of one's sins, and an appreciation for God's generosity, especially appreciation for the love Jesus demonstrated on the cross. The memory of the blood reassures the individual of God's love: "In the memory of the blood one finds the fire of most ardent charity.... There it inebriates you and burns and consumes every selfish self-love that was in you, so that with the fire of His love He extinguishes the fire of fear and selfish love of self. Why is the fire found in the blood? Because the blood was spilled with the most ardent fire of love."²⁶⁸

A passage from a letter Catherine writes to Raimondo impresses upon him his responsibility to appropriate the grace available in the blood, whatever the circumstances in which he may find himself:

Drown yourself then in the blood of Christ crucified, bathe yourself in the blood, inebriate yourself with the blood, satiate yourself with the blood, and clothe yourself with the blood. And if you had been unfaithful, re-baptize yourself in the blood. If the devil had clouded the eye of your understanding, wash your eye with the blood. If you had fallen into ingratitude, not knowing of the gifts, be grateful in the blood. If you were a cowardly pastor and without the rod of justice, seasoned with prudence and mercy, draw it out from the blood. And with the eye of the understanding see it in the blood and with the hand of love, take it, and with anxious desire grasp it. In the heat of the blood dissolve tepidity, and in the light of the blood chase out the darkness, in order that you may be a spouse of the Truth and a true pastor and governor of the sheep who are put in your hands, and a lover of the

²⁶⁶ "E il sangue conoscerete nel cognoscimento di voi, però che la faccia dell'anima si lava col sangue: e 'l sangue è nostro...come vasello, empitevi del sangue di Cristo crocifisso" (Letter 193, III, 154). Catherine wrote this letter to Lorenzo del Pino, a prominent lawyer in Bologna. Noffke would date this letter between March 1 and 31, 1378. For another reference to seeing God's love through self-knowledge, see Letter 153.

²⁶⁷ "Dove truoviamo questo sangue? Nel cognoscimento di noi" (Letter 102, II, 127). This letter was sent to Raimondo. Noffke places this letter between December 15, 1379, and January 30, 1380.

²⁶⁸ "[N]ella memoria del sangue si truova el fuoco dell'ardentissima carità.... Ine t'inebria e ardi e consuma ogni amore proprio che fusse in te, si che col fuoco d'esso amore spenga il fuoco del timore e amore proprio di te. Perchè si truova el fuoco nel sangue? Perchè el sangue fu sparto con ardentissimo fuoco d'amore" (Letter 73, II, 6). Noffke holds that this letter was written between February and early May 1376. For a reference to animating the understanding and will by use of the memory, see Gardner II (Misciattelli X).

cell of the soul and of the body, as much as it is possible in your state. If you will stay in the blood, you will do it, and if not, no.²⁶⁹

Catherine encourages her disciples to keep a conscious awareness of the blood in their struggles: "Setting before the eye of your understanding the blood spilled with such a fire of love in order that being free, you may be animated in battle."²⁷⁰ She instructs them that this memory will strengthen them: "In the memory of the blood you will have the victory."²⁷¹ The memory of the blood continuously inebriates the soul with its benefits.²⁷² She compares the frequent recollection of the blood to a daily baptism and bath.²⁷³

Many times Catherine advises her readers to "bathe themselves in the blood," as a deliberate act of uniting themselves with its saving power. She urges: "Let us be hidden in the cavern of the side of Christ crucified, where you have found the abundance of blood.... I desired to see you bathed and drowned in the blood of

²⁶⁹ "Annegatevi dunque nel sangue di Cristo crocifisso, e bagnatevi nel sangue, e inebriatevi del sangue, e saziatevi del sangue, e vestitevi di sangue. E se fuste fatto infedele, ribattezzatevi nel sangue; se il dimonio v'avesse offuscato l'occhio dell'intelletto, lavatevi l'occhio col sangue; se fuste caduto nella ingratitude de' doni non cognosciuti, siate grato nel sangue; se fuste pastore vile e senza la verga della giustizia, condita con prudenzia e misericordia, traetela dal sangue; e coll'occhio dell'intelletto vederla dentro nel sangue, e con la mano dell'amore pigliarla, e con ansietato desiderio strignerla. Nel caldo del sangue dissolvete la tepidezza; e nel lume del sangue caggia la tenebra; acciocchè siate sposo della Verità e pastore vero e governatore delle pecorelle che vi sono messe tra le mani, e amatore della cella dell'anima e del corpo, quanto v'è possibile nello stato vostro. Se starete nel sangue, il farete; e se no, no" (Letter 102, II, 129).

²⁷⁰ "[P]onendoti dinanzi all'occhio dell'intelletto il sangue sparto con tanto fuoco d'amore; acciocchè, fatto libero, sia inanimato alla battaglia" (Letter 205, III, 201). This letter was sent to Stefano Maconi. Noffke dates this letter between December 15 and 20, 1378. For other references to the animating power of the blood, see Letter 293 and Gardner I (Misciattelli IX)..

²⁷¹ "Nella memoria del sangue averete la vittoria" (Letter 261, IV, 113). This letter was sent to Mariano, a priest. Noffke posits a possible date in late autumn 1374. For Catherine's teaching on the grace given through the blood in times of temptation, see Letter 84.

²⁷² "Since such benefit follows from being inebriated with this precious blood through its continuous memory, I invite you to this." "Adunque bene è da inebriarsi di questo prezioso sangue per continua memoria, poi che tanta utilità ne seguita; e a questo v'invito" (Misciattelli, Letter XVI, VI, 41). This is Letter VIII in Gardner's appendix, 422. Gardner thinks the letter was written in Rome in late 1379. This letter was written to the prioress and nuns of the Monastery of Santa Agnesa da Monte Pulciano. Gardner found this letter in the Casanatense MS 292. For other references to the memory of the blood, see Letter 23 and Letter 55.

²⁷³ "Through generosity He has slain Himself, and made for us a bath and a baptism of His blood, which baptism each day we are able and we ought to use with great love and continuous memory." "[P]er larghezza à svenato sè medesimo, e fattoci bagno e battesimo del sangue suo, el quale battesimo ogni di potiamo e doviamo usare con grande amore e continua memoria" (Letter 101, II, 122). Noffke locates this letter between March 15 and 31, 1376. This letter was sent to Cardinal Iacopo Orsini who was one of the official protectors of Siena at the papal court in Avignon.

Christ crucified."²⁷⁴ The memory of the blood provides the will to bear life's sufferings, because one is strengthened knowing the extent of Jesus' love for oneself.²⁷⁵

Those who follow the way of Christ actively immerse themselves in the blood of Christ: "Place yourself on the cross with Christ crucified, hide yourself in the blood of Christ crucified, follow him through the way of the cross, conform yourself with Christ crucified, delight yourself in shame, pains, tortures, torments, ridicule, and insults for the love of Christ crucified, bearing them to the end of your life, tasting always the blood which pours down through the cross."²⁷⁶

For Catherine, this spiritual immersion in the blood is a daily responsibility: "Let all of us true faithful Christians run daily to this blood, after its fragrance."²⁷⁷ In fact, the recollection of the blood should permeate one's entire day: "And we ought not to pass a moment of time that the eye of our understanding does not set before itself the blood of Christ crucified, where we find the truth of the supreme and eternal Father, shown to us with the means of the blood."²⁷⁸

Catherine's thought on the blood moves from God towards the neighbor. She maintains that those who realize the love God has for them will share that love with their neighbors. She uses a colorful analogy to explain this principle:

²⁷⁴ "Ma nascondianci nella caverna del costato di Cristo crocifisso, dove hai trovato l'abondanza del sangue.... Io desideravo di vederti bagnata e annegata nel sangue di Cristo crocifisso" (Letter 308, IV, 293). The letter to Suor Daniella makes reference to the schism, which began on September 20, 1378. For another instance of the figure of the cavern, see *Oratio* XII.

²⁷⁵ "And with what does he remove this will? With the memory of the blood of Christ crucified. This blood is of such delight that every bitterness in the memory of this blood becomes sweet, and every great weight becomes light because in the blood of Christ we find the ineffable love with which we are loved by Him because for love He has given us life and given us back the grace which through sin we lost." "E con che si tolle questa volontà? Colla memoria del sangue di Cristo crocifisso. Questo sangue è di tanto diletto che ogni amaritudine nella memoria di questo sangue diventa dolce, e ogni gran peso diventa leggiero: però che nel sangue di Cristo troviamo l'amore ineffabile con che siamo amati da lui: perocchè per amore ci ha data la vita e rendutaci la Grazia, la quale noi per lo peccato perdemmo" (Letter 264, IV, 129-130). In this letter, Catherine comforts Monna Jacoma Trinci at the time of the assassination of her husband, Trincio de' Trinci, the Lord of Folgino, which took place on September 28, 1377. Noffke places the letter in early to mid-October 1377.

²⁷⁶ "Poneti in su la croce con Cristo crocifisso, nascondeti nel sangue di Cristo crocifisso, seguitalo per la via della croce, conformati con Cristo crocifisso, dilettaati degli obbrobi, pene, stratii, tormenti, scherni e vilanie per l'amore di Cristo crocifisso, sostenendo infino all'ultimo della vita tua, gustando sempre el sangue che versa giù per la croce" (Letter 73, II, 9). This letter was sent to Suor Costanza. Noffke places this letter between February and early May 1376.

²⁷⁷ "[C]orriamo tutti e' veri fedeli cristiani, all'ogietto di questo sangue, dietro all'odore suo" (Letter 29, I, 108).

²⁷⁸ "E non dobbiamo passare punto di tempo, che l'occhio dell'intelletto nostro non si ponga per obietto il sangue di Cristo crocifisso, dove truova la verità del sommo ed eterno Padre, manifestata a noi col mezzo del sangue" (Letter 331, V, 90).

This blood is a wine which inebriates the soul. As much as one drinks, one would desire to drink more and is never satiated because His blood and His flesh is united with the infinite God.... Do as the one who drinks much, who loses himself and does not see himself. And if he loves wine much, he drinks more again, and finally having warmed his stomach with wine, he is not able to hold it and he vomits it outside. Truly, son, we find this wine upon this table, that is the open side of the Son of God.... And when he has drunk well, he casts it over the head of his brothers, and has learned from that One who, upon the table, continually pours out [the blood] not for His benefit but for ours.²⁷⁹

In ways that are similar to the symbol of the blood, Catherine refers to the wounds, the opened side, and heart of Christ, as not only historic but present realities. M. Vincent Bernadot, O.P., shows that, from the end of the thirteenth century, the Dominican Order celebrated a feast of the Wounded Side on the Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi.²⁸⁰ This emphasis on the wounds of Jesus among the Dominicans could only have reinforced Catherine's inclination to focus on the bodily signs of Jesus' suffering. The wounds of Jesus have a particular significance for Catherine since on Palm Sunday, April 1, 1375, she received the stigmata while she was in the Church of St. Cristina in Pisa. At her request the wounds were kept invisible.²⁸¹

It is very possible that Catherine was familiar with some of the Patristic references to the wounds, the side, and the heart of Jesus through the preaching she heard and the spiritual authors whom she knew. Domenico Cavalca's writings, for example, are replete with references to the Fathers. Jesus' wounds evoked a rich commentary among the Fathers. St. Augustine, for instance, identifies the wound in the side as the origin of the sacraments: "One of the soldiers opened His side with a lance...so that there, in a way, the door of life might be opened, from where

²⁷⁹ "Questo sangue è uno vino che inebbria l'anima, del quale quanto più beie, più ne vorrebbe bere, e non si satia mai, però che 'l sangue e la carne è unita con lo infinito Dio.... Fate come colui che molto beie, che perde sè medesimo e non si vede, e se 'l vino molto gli diletta, anco ne beie più, e intanto che, riscaldato lo stomaco dal vino, no 'l può tenere e si 'l bomica fuore. Veramente, figliuolo, che su questa mensa troviamo questo vino, cioè el costato uperto del Figliuolo di Dio.... E quando egli à bene beuto, egli el gitta sopra el capo de' fratelli suoi; à imparato da colui che in mensa continuamente versa, non per sua utilità, ma per nostra" (Letter 208, III, 212-213). See DT VI. Dupré points out that this letter was sent to Bartolomeo Dominici while he was in Asciano, probably doing Lenten preaching. Noffke dates this between in Holy Week, April 6 and 10, 1376. For a reference to the blood as a source of strength, see Letter 224.

²⁸⁰ M. Vincent Bernadot, O.P., "Le développement historique de la dévotion au Sacré Cœur," *La vie spirituelle* 2 (1920): 200.

²⁸¹ See Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, II, cxcv, 910.

flow the sacraments of the Church, without which one does not enter into life, which is the true life."²⁸²

Gregory the Great, in his commentary on the Song of Songs, applies the Vulgate reading: "*Columba mea in foraminibus petrae, in caverna maceriae*" (2:14) to Jesus' wounded side, describing the side as a crevice where the soul can hide: "The crevice of the garden wall [is] the wound of the side that the lance had made."²⁸³

Bernard presents the wounds as places of rest, storehouses of mercy, and openings to the secret of the heart:

And indeed where are security and rest safe and firm for the weak except in the wounds of the Savior?... Truly what is lacking to me, I confidently take to myself from the inner recesses of the Lord, since they pour out mercy: nor are the openings through which they flow lacking.... The sword pierced His soul and His heart drew near, so that no longer shall He not know suffering with my weaknesses.... The secret of the heart is laid open through the openings of the body: that great mystery of compassion is laid open; the inner recesses of mercy of our God are laid open.... These things are stored for me in the openings of the rock...I will go to that fully furnished cellar.²⁸⁴

Catherine echoes and develops these ideas. According to Catherine, a person must spiritually immerse him- or herself in the wounds, the side, and heart of Christ, to assimilate the effects of Jesus' death. She counsels her disciples that they will find deliverance from temptation in the wounds of Christ: "For if you will gaze upon and will hide yourself in the wounds of the Son of God, you will be delivered from every sting and temptation of sin, because the devil is not able to go against the soul, wounded and injured with the wounds of Christ."²⁸⁵

²⁸² "[U]nus militum lancea, latus ejus aperuit...ut illic quodammodo vitae ostium panderetur, unde sacramenta Ecclesiae manaverunt, sine quibus ad vitam quae vera vita est, non intratur." S. Augustine, *In Joannis Evangelium*, CXX; PL XXXV, 1953.

²⁸³ "Cavernam vero maceriae, vulnus lateris quod lancea factum est." Sancti Gregorii Magni, *Super Cantica Canticorum Exposito*; PL LXXIX, 499.

²⁸⁴ "Et revera ubi tuta firmaque infirmis securitas et requies, nisi in vulneribus Salvatoris?... Ego vero fidenter quod ex mihi deest usurpo mihi ex visceribus Domini, quoniam misericordia affluunt: nec desunt foramina per quae effluant.... Ferrum pertransit animam ejus, et appropinquavit cor illius, ut non jam non sciat compati infirmitatibus meis.... Patet arcanum cordis per foramina corporis: patet magnum illud pietatis sacramentum, patent viscera misericordiae Dei nostri.... Hae in foraminibus petrae repositae mihi.... Ibo mihi ad illa sic referta cellaria." S. Bernard, *Sermones in Cantica*, LXI; PL CLXXXIII, 1072-1073.

²⁸⁵ "Però che se voi riguardarete e nascondaretevi nelle piaghe del Figliuolo di Dio, sarete deliverate da ogni morsura e tentatione di peccato, però che 'l dimonio non può contra l'anima che è ferita e piagata delle piaghe di Cristo" (Duprè, II). This letter was written to her friends, Gianetta, Antonia, and Caterina. This is one of the two letters found by Eugenio Duprè Theseider in 1931. See Eugenio Duprè Theseider, "Un codice inedito dell'epistolario di S. Caterina da Siena," estratto dal

Catherine describes the experience of surrendering oneself and one's sins to Jesus in the very graphic terms of entering into Jesus' wounds and being bathed with the blood. Thus, she encourages a prostitute in Perugia:

You, as a daughter and servant, bought back with blood, enter then into the wounds of the Son of God, where you will find such a fire of ineffable charity, which will consume and will burn all your miseries and your defects. You will see that He has made you a bath of blood to wash you from the leprosy of deadly sin, and of its filth, in which for so long you remained. Your gentle God will not scorn you.²⁸⁶

Catherine is so assured of the absolute acceptance available for her in the wounds of Christ that, when the devil tries to convince her that her own life had been a lie, based on her will rather than God's, she insists: "I confess to My Creator that my life has not passed other than in darkness. But I will hide myself in the wounds of Christ crucified and I will bathe myself in His blood, and so My iniquity will be consumed and I will rejoice through the desire of My Creator."²⁸⁷

Catherine asserts that Jesus has retained His wounds in heaven as continuous appeals to God's mercy: "Through mercy You have reserved the scars in the body of Your Son, in order that with those scars, He may ask mercy for us before Your majesty."²⁸⁸ Catherine pictures those in heaven exulting over the sacred wounds that cry for mercy: "There they exult in His wounds, which always remain fresh, retaining the scars in His body, which continually cry out for mercy from Me, the supreme and eternal Father, for you."²⁸⁹

In a letter to Raimondo, Catherine narrates the execution of the young Perugian, Niccolò di Toldo, whom she had helped die. She describes the vision in which Jesus receives Niccolò's soul by placing him in His side, symbolizing Niccolò's ac-

Bullettino dell' Istituto storico italiano e Archivio Muratoriano 48 (1932): 34. For another reference to Jesus' victory over the devil, the flesh, and the world, see Gardner I (Misciattelli IX).

²⁸⁶ "Tu, come figliuola e serva ricomperata di sangue, entra allora nelle piaghe del figliuolo di Dio; dove troverai tanto fuoco di ineffabile carità, che consumerà e arderà tutte le miserie e' difetti tuoi. Vederai che t'ha fatto bagno di sangue per lavarti dalla lebbra del peccato mortale, e della sua immondizia, nella quale tanto tempo se' stata. Non ti schiferà il dolce Dio tuo" (Letter 276, IV, 184). Noffke places this letter between late January and early May 1376.

²⁸⁷ "Io confesso al mio Creatore che la vita mia non è passata altro che in tenebre; ma io mi nasconderò nelle piaghe di Cristo crocifisso e bagnerommi nel sangue suo, e così averò consumate le iniquità mie e goderommi, per desiderio, nel mio Creatore" (*Il Dialogo*, LXVI, 171).

²⁸⁸ "Per misericordia riservasti le cicatrici nel corpo del tuo Figliuolo, acciò che con esse chiega misericordia per noi dinanzi a la tua maestà" (*Oratio* XIX, 216). This prayer was given on Sexagesima Sunday, February 13, 1379. For another reference to the wounds as a continual plea for mercy, see *Oratio* VII.

²⁸⁹ "Ine esultano nelle piaghe sue, le quali sono rimase fresche, riservate le cicatrici nel corpo suo, le quali gridano continuamente misericordia a me, sommo ed eterno Padre, per voi" (*Il Dialogo*, XLI, 105).

ceptance in the mercy of Jesus, symbolized by His wounded side: "He awaited that soul to depart from the body with the eye of mercy turned toward him, as he came to enter into the side, bathed in his blood, which was given value through the blood of the Son of God."²⁹⁰

In the side of Christ, one encounters the entire Trinity, experiencing in Jesus' saving wound the power of the Father, the wisdom of the Son, and the clemency of the Spirit.²⁹¹ Catherine uses graphic words to urge her disciples to set themselves at the side of Christ: "Put, put your mouth to the side of the Son of God.... I say that the soul which reposes there and looks with the eye of the mind at the heart consumed and opened for love, receives in herself such conformity with Him, seeing herself so loved that she is not able to do other than to love.... Fulfill my desire, so that I see you as one, united and transformed in Him."²⁹²

Catherine's writings make abundant references to Jesus' heart. In his encyclical, *Haurietis Aquas*, of May 15, 1956, Pope Pius XII names Catherine among the saints whose writings anticipated the modern devotion to the Sacred Heart.²⁹³ For Cather-

²⁹⁰ "Aspettava quella anima partita dal corpo, - vòlto l'occhio della misericordia verso di lui, - quando venne a 'ntrare dentro nel costato, bagnato nel sangue suo, che valeva per lo sangue del Figliuolo di Dio!" (Letter 273, IV, 177). Noffke suggests that this was written shortly after June 13, 1375.

²⁹¹ "Therefore in this object of Christ crucified, one finds the Father and shares His power. He finds the wisdom of the only-begotten Son of God, which illumines the intellect. He tastes and sees the clemency of the Holy Spirit, finding the affection and the love with which Christ has given to us the benefit of His passion, makes for us a bath of blood, where our iniquities are washed. He has made for us a dwelling and hiding place in His side, where the soul reposes itself and finds and tastes God and Man. Now, this, I wish that we do, dearest father, so the eye of our mind never shuts itself, but always sees and considers how much we are loved by God, which love was manifested by means of His Son." "Perocchè in questo oggetto di Cristo crocifisso truova il Padre, e partecipa della potenza sua; truova la sapienza dell'unigenito Figliuolo di Dio, il quale gl'illumina lo intelletto; gusta e vede la clemenza dello Spirito Santo, trovando l'affetto e l'amore con che Cristo ha donato a noi il beneficio della sua passione, facendoci bagno di sangue, dove sono lavate le nostre iniquitadi; del costato suo ci ha fatto abitazione e recettacolo, dove l'anima si riposa, e truova e gusta Dio e Uomo. Or questo voglio che noi facciamo, carissimo Padre; sicchè l'occhio dell'intelletto nostro non si serri mai, ma sempre vegga e ragguardi quanto egli è amato da Dio; il quale amore ci ha manifestato per mezzo del Figliuolo suo" (Letter 158, III, 20-21). This letter was addressed to Nino, a priest from Pisa. Noffke estimates that this letter may be written early in 1377 or even as late as 1379.

²⁹² "Ponete ponete la bocca al costato del Figliuolo di Dio.... Dico che l'anima che vi si riposa e ragguarda con l'occhio dello intelletto el cuore consumato e aperto per amore, ella riceve in sè tanta conformità con lui, vedendosi tanto amare, che non può fare che non ami.... Fate che adempiate el mio desiderio, sì che io vi veggia una cosa, unite e transformate in lui" (Letter 97, II, 112-113). This letter was sent to Monna Pavola da Siena. Noffke asserts that this letter was written in early April 1376.

²⁹³ Pius XII, "Haurietis Aquas," *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 48 (1956): 338.

ine, both Jesus' side and His heart demonstrate Jesus' generosity: "Jesus, to give us the life of grace...and in the sign of His generosity, opened Himself wholly, and after He was dead, in a sign of love, He made a bath of His side. Now hide yourself within this side, and watch that you may not be found to have gone outside of this heart."²⁹⁴ Sr. Mary Jeremiah, O.P., comments on Catherine's depiction of the relationship between the heart and the open side:

She constantly changes and overlaps the images which she uses and often speaks of the pierced side in the same terms as the Heart. Yet they are not completely identical, for the open side is the passageway or entrance to the deeper reality of the heart. However, all of the riches of the Heart flow out through this portal of the side. Thus from this different perspective what is attributed to one may also be attributed to the other.²⁹⁵

Jesus' open side manifests His "secret": "Then you will come to the side of the open chest, through which opening I will show you My secret, because that which I have done, I have done with warm love. There your soul will be inebriated, you will taste God and Man in such peace; there you will find the warmth of the divine charity, you will know the infinite goodness of God."²⁹⁶ The open side reveals Jesus' heart: "The side shows you the secret of the heart because that which He has done and given for us, He has done through His own love."²⁹⁷

The expression "secret of the heart" is found in St. Bernard's commentary on the Song of Songs, as has been seen above. Catherine may have acquired this expression from Domenico Cavalca. In his *Specchio della Croce*, Cavalca attributes this phrase to St. Bernard: "Christ had opened His side to show us His heart. Indeed St.

²⁹⁴ "Gesù, che per darci la vita della gratia.... E in segno di larghezza elli aperse tutto sè medesimo, e poi che fu morto, in segno d'amore, del costato suo fece bagno.... Or vi nascondete dentro a questo costato, e guardate che di questo cuore partito voi non siate trovata fuore" (Letter 163, III, 34). This letter was sent to Monna Franceshina in Lucca. Noffke dates this letter between January and April 1376.

²⁹⁵ Mary Jeremiah Gillett, O.P., *The Secret of the Heart* (Fort Royal, VA.: Christendom Press, 1995), 95.

²⁹⁶ "Poi giognarai al lato del costato aperto, per la quale apertura ti mostro el secreto mio, chè quello che io ò fatto, ò fatto per amore cordiale. Ine s'inebrierà l'anima tua, in tanta pace gustarete Iddio-e-uomo; ine si truovarà el caldo della divina carità, cognoscirete la infinità bontà di Dio" (Letter 74, II, 11). This letter was sent to the Dominican, Frate Niccolò da Monte Alcino. Tommasèo notes concerning Frate Niccolò, "Uomo di solitudine, morto nel 1398; ha titolo di beato." See II, 10. Noffke considers this letter to have been written between February and April 1376.

²⁹⁷ "Il costato ti mostra il secreto del cuore: chè quello ch' egli ha fatto e dato per noi, ha fatto per proprio amore" (Letter 112, II, 164). This letter was written to Countess Bandeçça Salimbeni. Noffke dates this letter near April 1377.

Bernard says that the opening of the side manifested the secret of the heart, and the kindness of the heart of Christ is seen."²⁹⁸

Catherine identifies the "secret of the heart" with Jesus' infinite love: "Inside of Him, we find God, that is, the divine nature united with the human nature. We find the fire of love which, through the opening in the side, shows us the secret of the heart, showing that there was no comparison between His finite suffering and His infinite love."²⁹⁹ The love in the heart may be called a "secret" since even the external sufferings of the Passion do not fully demonstrate the love that Jesus has for humanity. Catherine recalls words of Jesus to her: "Through the opening of the side I manifested to you the secret of the heart, because the affection inside that I had for humanity, was more than the body was able to show with the external action."³⁰⁰

For Catherine, the wounds of Jesus, His open side, and pierced heart are physical signs of Jesus' desire to give Himself for humanity. Jesus' love is clearly shown since He, God and Man, even allowed His body to be wounded by human hatred. In the wounds, one realizes the kindness and mercy of God. There the soul finds rest, forgiveness, and strength. These wounds also symbolize channels through which grace comes from the sufferings of Christ to humanity.

Catherine teaches her disciples to maintain this conscious awareness of these signs of Jesus sufferings, in order that they may realize the "secret of the heart," which is the love of Jesus for them: "Therefore, I wish that you may be enclosed in the opened side of the Son of God, which is an opened store, full of fragrance, in so much that the sin becomes odorous. There the gentle spouse reposes on the bed of

²⁹⁸ "Cristo ebbe il lato aperto per mostrarci il cuore suo. Onde dice santo Bernardo, che per l'apertura del lato si manifesta il secreto del cuore, e si vede la benignità del cuore di Cristo." Domenico Cavalca, O.P., *Lo Specchio della croce*, c.32 (Bologna: Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 1992), 254.

²⁹⁹ "Dentro in sè truoviamo Dio, cioè la natura divina unita con la natura umana; truoviamo il fuoco dell'amore che per l'apertura del lato ci manifesta il secreto del cuore, mostrando che perchè non era comparazione della pena finita sua all'amore infinito" (Letter 55, I, 213). This letter was written to Guglielmo, the Prior General of the Carthusians. From the contents, Noffke estimates that this letter was written between September 20 and October 31, 1377. For other references to the comparison between the finite and infinite suffering, see *Il Dialogo*, LXXV.

³⁰⁰ "[P]er l'apertura del lato vi manifestai el secreto del cuore, però che più era dentro l'affetto, che io aveva all'uomo, che 'l corpo con l'atto di fuore non poteva mostrare" (Letter 189, III, 137). This letter is addressed to the monks at Cervia and to Frate Giovanni di Bindo, Niccolò di Ghida, as well as her other disciples among the monks of Monte Oliveto. Noffke estimates that the original letter was sent to the monks at Cervia in early April 1376, and that it is possible that Catherine had visited the monks about that time as she returned from Avignon. For another reference to the comparison between the finite sufferings and the infinite love, see Letter 318.

fire and of blood. There she sees and is shown the secret of the heart of the Son of God."³⁰¹

Belief in the Mercy

The relationship that humanity has with God is based on the absolute gratuity of God from Whom comes existence and every good. The gratuitous nature of God's love is further suggested when one considers that humanity has chosen sin both in Adam and by personal decision. God's gift of His Son, and Jesus' acceptance of a painful death exceed the bounds of generosity. This extravagant compassion is God's *misericordia* or "mercy." Despite sin, God chooses not to abandon His original designs for humanity, as Catherine realized through a vision: "Then, raising her eye through obedience to the Eternal Father, she saw in His closed fist all the world. God said, 'Now see, My daughter, and know that no one is able to be taken from Me, because they are all here, either in justice or in mercy, as I said. For all are Mine and are created by Me, and I love them ineffably.'"³⁰²

Seeing that God's loving actions on behalf of humanity are so undeserved, Catherine exclaims: "And You, high and eternal Trinity, say that compassion, which sprouts mercy, is Yours since mercy is proper to You, and mercy is never without compassion because through compassion You have mercy on us. I confess that only through compassion You gave the Word, Your Son, to death for our redemption."³⁰³

Mercy is the motive for Jesus' sufferings: "Your mercy made Your Son wrestle with His arms upon the wood of the cross, wrestling death with life, and life with death. Then life conquered the death of our sin and the death of our sin took the bodily life of the immaculate Lamb. What remained conquered? Death. What was the reason? Your mercy."³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ "Così voglio che vi serriate nel costato aperto del Figliuolo di Dio, el quale è una bottiga aperta, piena d'odore, in tanto che 'l peccato diventa odorifero. Ine la dolce sposa si riposa nel letto del fuoco e del sangue, ine vede ed è manifestato el segreto del cuore del Figliuolo di Dio" (Letter 273, IV, 174). For other references to the "secret of the heart," see Letter 112.

³⁰² "Allora ella, levando l'occhio per obedire al sommo Padre, vedeva nel pugno suo rinchiuso tutto l'universo mondo, dicendo Dio: Figliuola mia, or vedi e sappi che veruno me ne può essere tolto, però che tutti ci stanno, o per giustizia o per misericordia come detto è, però che sono miei e creati da me, e amogli ineffabilmente" (*Il Dialogo*, XVIII, 56).

³⁰³ "E se tu dici, alta ed eterna Trinità, che la pietà, la quale germina misericordia, t'è propria - perchè la misericordia t'è propria, la quale non è senza la pietà, però che per pietà hai tu misericordia di noi - io el confesso, per ciò che per pietà solamente desti el Verbo del tuo Figliuolo a la morte per la nostra redenzione" (*Oratio* VIII, 80). This prayer was made on Shrove Tuesday, February 22, 1379.

³⁰⁴ "La misericordia tua fece giocare in sul legno della croce il Figliuolo tuo alle braccia, giocando la morte con la vita e la vita con la morte. E allora la vita sconfisse la morte della colpa nostra e la

The mercy of God, besides being the motive of the redemption, also describes the actual giving of the fruits of the redemption to humanity. Just as Jesus died for humanity, which was given over to sin, so God mercifully continues to give the graces of the cross to individual sinners. Jesus' death on the cross is the assurance of continual mercy: "In the blood we find the abundance of His mercy and there one sees that God does not wish other than our good."³⁰⁵

On account of the blood that has been shed and is offered to those who will accept it, one can approach God with confidence not in one's own goodness but in the goodness of God. Believers in God's mercy approach God with a "living faith" that has confidence in God's merciful motives for our good:

You will conceive a living faith and with this you will gaze upon the divine mercy. And in faith you will find that God does not seek nor want other than our sanctification. And that we might be sanctified in Him, He gave us the Word, His Son, and wished that He might die the shameful death of the cross. There is found such an abundance of mercy that neither the human tongue nor heart is sufficient to be able to say it or imagine it.³⁰⁶

Although Catherine regards sin with great seriousness and even blames herself for many of the evils of her time, she has an overwhelming confidence in the power of Christ's blood:

And so I confess that my life, with the works that I have done, does not merit other than hell. But I have faith and hope in my Creator and in the blood of the consumed and slain Lamb, that He will pardon me my sins and will give me His grace. And I will strive to correct my life for the present time. And if indeed death might come to me now before I corrected my life, that is, that I have not yet done penance for my sins, I say, I confide myself in my Lord Jesus Christ. I see that there is no comparison between the divine mercy and my sins. Furthermore, if all the sins

morte della colpa tolse la vita corporale' allo immacolato Agnello. Chi rimase vinto? La morte. Chi ne fu cagione? La misericordia tua" (*Il Dialogo*, XXX, 82).

³⁰⁵ "Nel sangue troviamo la larghezza della sua misericordia; e ine si vede che Dio non vuole altro che 'l nostro bene" (Letter 264, IV, 130). This letter is to Monna Jacoma di Trinci. For a reference to God's mercy as a continuous help, see *Il Dialogo*, XXX.

³⁰⁶ "E conceparete una fede viva, e con essa ragguardarete la divina misericordia; e nella fede troverete che Dio non cerca nè vuole altro che la nostra santificazione. E perchè noi fussimo santificati in lui, ci donò el verbo del Figliuolo suo e volse che morisse dell'obbrobriosa morte della croce. Ine si truova tanta larghezza di misericordia che lingua umana nè cuore non è sofficiente a poterlo dire nè imaginare" (Letter 314, V, 25). Noffke places this letter in mid-October 1377. This letter was sent to Monna Costanza Soderini, the wife of Niccolò Solderini, a benefactor of Catherine in Florence. He had lent money to her three brothers after they moved to Florence and had been unsuccessful in their business. Catherine stayed with the Solderini family during her visits to Florence. As a result of the political upheavals of 1378, Niccolò was banished from Florence.

which are able to be committed were gathered together in one creature, they are less than one little drop of vinegar in the midst of the sea.³⁰⁷

Catherine frequently writes to encourage individuals to have confidence in the mercy of God. She is convinced that many men and women do not believe that God can accept them with their sins. This misapprehension frustrates Jesus' efforts to draw them to the Father through the mercy that flows from His self-sacrifice. Francesco Malavolti, a Sieneese nobleman whom Catherine had converted from an immoral life, had this misconception. On several occasions, Catherine recalled him from slipping back into his former sins. In one letter she writes: "Recognize your guilt, not with confusion of mind but with knowledge of yourself and with hope in the goodness of God. Then, do as that prodigal son did, who...recognized his defect and ran back to the father for mercy.... Then run back to the Father for mercy because He will help you, and He will not be a despiser of your desire, founded in bitterness from the sins you committed. Rather He will fulfill it gently."³⁰⁸

Catherine observes that people who do not resolve their sins in God's mercy continue to live in what she identifies as "confusion." In a letter to Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi, a young disciple who was especially prone to be melancholy, Catherine asks, "Is He not more apt to forgive than we are to sin? And is He not our doctor and we His sick? And does He not hold confusion of the mind to be worse than all the other defects?"³⁰⁹ She urges him: "Dearest son, open the eye of your mind with the light of most holy faith, and consider how much you are loved by

³⁰⁷ "E anco ti confesso che la vita mia, con l'operationi che io ò fatte, non meritano altro che l'onferno; ma io ò fede e speranza nel mio creatore e nel sangue del consumato e svenuto agnello, che mi perdonerà i miei peccati e darammì la sua gratia, e io m'ingegnerò di correggiare la vita mia per lo tempo presente. E se pure la morte ora mi venisse prima che io correggessi la vita mia, cioè che io anco non avessi fatta penitencia de' peccati miei, dico: Io mi ne confido nel mio signore Gesù Cristo; io veggo che non è neuna comparatione dalla divina misericordia a' peccati miei; anco più, che se tutti e' peccati che si possono commettere fussero raunati in una creatura, sono meno che una gocciola d'aceto in mezzo del mare" (Letter 314, V, 26).

³⁰⁸ "[R]icognosci la colpa tua, non con confusione di mente, ma con cognoscimento di te, e con sperare nella bontà di Dio.... Fa' dunque come fe' quello figliuolo prodigo...ricognobbe il suo difetto, e ricorse al padre per misericordia.... Ricorri dunque al Padre per misericordia: perocchè ti sovrerà, e non sarà spregiatore del tuo desiderio, fondato in amaritudine del peccato commesso; anco l'adempirà dolcemente" (Letter 45, I, 179). Noffke dates this letter in January 1377. After Catherine's death, Malavolti became a Benedictine monk at Mont' Oliveto.

³⁰⁹ "E non è egli più atto a perdonare, che noi a peccare? Non è egli nostro medico, e noi gl'infermi?... E non ha egli per peggio la confusione della mente, che tutti gli altri difetti?" (Letter 178, III, 97). Noffke dates this letter between September 1 and November 1, 1379. Neri was of noble background. He was a reader of Dante and wrote poetry himself. He brought a number of his friends, such as Malavolti, to become disciples of Catherine. After Catherine's death, he became a hermit.

God."³¹⁰ The source of hope is not one's own power but the power of the blood, as she states in another letter: "But hope in the blood, and drive away despair, judging the mercy of God, which he finds in the blood, to be greater than his misery."³¹¹

In *Il Dialogo*, Catherine depicts the Father stating that to consider sin outside of the context of the blood shed for sin is to disregard God's offer of mercy:

I said that I do not want her to have nor ought she to keep only the awareness of sins in general or in particular without awareness and memory of the blood and of the abundance of the mercy, so that she may not come to confusion. For if knowledge of herself and consideration of sin are not seasoned with memory of the blood and hope of the mercy, she would stay in this confusion. And with this it would happen, that the devil has led her under the appearance of contrition and sorrow for sin and contempt for sin into eternal damnation. Not only through this but on account of this, not taking the arm of My mercy, she would come to despair.³¹²

Placing more emphasis on one's sins than on God's mercy implies that one's sins are greater than God's mercy. Thus, the Father laments the soul that chooses despair: "And in despair he spurns My mercy, making his sin greater than My mercy and My goodness....If he were to be sorrowful and repented for the offense he had done to Me, and hoped in the mercy, he would have found mercy. For without any comparison, as I told you, My mercy is greater than all the sins that any creature might be able to commit. And so it displeases Me greatly that they consider their sins greater."³¹³

³¹⁰ "[C]arissimo figliuolo, apri l'occhio dell'intelletto tuo col lume della santissima fede, e ragguarda quanto tu sei amato da Dio" (Letter 178, III, 97).

³¹¹ "Ma spera nel sangue, e caccia la disperazione, giudicando maggiore la misericordia di Dio, la quale truova nel sangue, che la miseria sua" (Letter 343, V, 145). This letter was written to Rainaldo da Capua, a lay intellectual. Noffke suggests August 15 and November 30, 1379, as the time of this letter. For other references to God's help, see *Il Dialogo*, CXXXV and Letter 343.

³¹² "Dicevo che Io non voglio che abbi, nè debba avere, solo la considerazione de' peccati in comune in particolare senza la considerazione e memoria del sangue e della larghezza della misericordia, acciò che non venga a confusione. Che se il cognoscimento di sè e considerazione del peccato non fosse condito con la memoria del sangue e speranza della misericordia, starebbe in essa confusione; e con essa giugnerebbe, col dimonio che l'à guidata sotto colore di contrizione e dolore della colpa e dispiacimento del peccato, all'eterna dannazione; non per questo solamente, ma perchè da questo, non pigliando il braccio della misericordia mia, verrebbe e disperazione" (*Il Dialogo*, LXVI, 170).

³¹³ "[E] nella disperazione spregia la misericordia mia, facendo maggiore il difetto suo che la misericordia e bontà mia.... E se egli si fusse doluto, e pentutosi de l'offesa che aveva fatta a me, e sperato nella misericordia, avarebbe trovato misericordia. Però che senza alcuna comparazione, si com' Io ti dissi, e' maggiore la misericordia mia che tutti i peccati che potesse commettere neuna creatura, e però molto mi dispiace che essi pongano maggiori i difetti loro" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXII, 413-414).

The unforgivable sin is rejecting God's mercy at death, as the Father states in describing the despairing soul: "This is that sin which is not forgiven, neither here nor there, because he did not want My mercy, spurning it. For to Me, this is more serious than all the other sins that he had committed. So the despair of Judas displeased Me more and was more serious to My Son than was the betrayal that he did to Him. So they are reproached with this false judgment of having held their sin to be greater than My mercy."³¹⁴

By contrast, the person who dies with confidence in God's mercy considers that he or she will be saved by the blood of Jesus. Such a person does not expect to deserve this mercy or to earn it even by virtuous actions. The soul with such hope prepares for death by living with this hope, as the Father explains:

And she [the soul] does not turn back to look at past virtues because she does not want nor is she able to hope in her virtues, but only in the blood where she has found My mercy. And as she has lived with the memory of the blood, so in death she is inebriated and drowns herself in the blood.... She expects to have this, through grace and not through her due, in the power of the blood of Christ, My Son. So she stretches the arms of hope and she grasps it with the hands of love, entering into possession before she is there.³¹⁵

Since God's mercy is offered to each person in the blood of Jesus, ultimately each person chooses to accept or not to accept God's mercy. The seriousness of one's sins does not disqualify any person from this mercy. Those who ask for mercy, receive mercy. Those who refuse the mercy, receive what is their due in justice.

Catherine appeals to God to continue to pour mercy upon humanity, the same mercy that has motivated all His actions on humanity's behalf: "Turn the eye of Your mercy upon your creatures. I know that mercy is Yours and wherever I turn I find nothing but Your mercy. And therefore I run and I cry before Your mercy that You have mercy on the world."³¹⁶

³¹⁴ "Questo è quello peccato che non è perdonato nè di qua nè di là, perchè non à voluto, spregiando, la mia misericordia; però che più m'è grave questo che tutti gli altri peccati che egli à commessi. Unde la disperazione di Giuda mi dispiacque più, e più fu grave al mio Figliuolo, che non fu il tradimento ch'egli gli fece. Sì che sono ripresi di questo falso giudizio, d'averè posto maggiore il peccato loro che la misericordia mia" (*Il Dialogo*, XXXVII, 95).

³¹⁵ "E non si volle a dietro a mirare le virtù sue passate, perchè non vuole nè può sperare in sue virtù, ma solo nel sangue dove à trovata la misericordia mia. E come è vissuta con la memoria del sangue, così nella morte s'inebria e annegasi nel sangue.... Il quale aspetta d'averè, per grazia e non per debito, nella virtù del sangue di Cristo mio Figliuolo. Unde distende le braccia della speranza e con le mani de l'amore lo strigne, intrando in possessione prima che vi sia" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXI, 406-407).

³¹⁶ "Drizza l'occhio de la misericordia tua sopra le tue creature. Io cognosco che la misericordia t'è propria, anco dovunque io mi vollo non truovo altro che la misericordia tua; e però io corro e grido dinanzi alla misericordia tua che tu facci misericordia al mondo" (*Oratio* XIX, 210). This prayer was

Those who follow the footsteps of Jesus, whom Catherine calls the “servants of God,” ask that God’s mercy, the blood of Jesus, may be poured upon the world: “You gave us the true Shepherd, Your only-begotten Son, who through Your obedience laid down His life for Your little sheep and with His blood He has bathed us. This is that blood that Your hungry servants ask from You at this door. Through this blood, they ask that You may be merciful to the world and let the holy Church bloom again.”³¹⁷

The Salvific Effects of the Passion in the Lives of Believers

While salvation is oriented towards its fulfillment in God’s purpose for creation, the sharing of eternal life, salvation also includes the process by which the person comes to that end. During life, the individual receives the graces obtained for him or her by Jesus’ sacrificial death. By referring to these graces as “blood,” Catherine continually relates these movements of God in the soul to their source, the blood shed by Jesus. This “blood” is transmitted to the person, chiefly through the sacraments but also, at times, through other actions of God in the soul.

As dependent as each individual is on God, the individual is not a passive recipient of God’s grace. Catherine insists that these graces must be actualized in the life of the individual by the person’s cooperation: “The Eternal Truth showed that He had created us without us, but He would not save us without us.”³¹⁸ Catherine wrote her book and her many letters to encourage her readers to respond to God’s gift of love, manifested so clearly through the pouring out of Christ’s blood. Catherine asserts: “God wishes that the children of the human race be reborn...in the blood.”³¹⁹ This spiritual rebirth is a process which begins with God’s action in baptism but requires the individual’s acceptance and her or his cooperation with God’s desires for her or his sanctification.

In her letters, Catherine identifies very specific areas where growth is needed for each person with whom she corresponds. It is her conviction that Christ wants

given in Rome on Sexagesima Sunday, February 13, 1379. For another reference to the mercy, see *Il Dialogo*, XXX.

³¹⁷ “Ci desti il Pastore vero unigenito tuo Figliuolo, il quale per l’obediencia tua pose la vita per le tue pecorelle e del sangue ci fece bagno. Questo è quello sangue che t’adimandano come affamati a questa porta i servi tuoi; per lo quale sangue adimandano che tu facci misericordia al mondo, e rifiorisca la santa Chiesa” (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXIV, 427).

³¹⁸ “Qui mostrava, la Verità eterna, che egli ci aveva creati senza noi, ma non ci salverà senza noi” (*Il Dialogo*, XXIII, 62).

³¹⁹ “Vuole Dio, che ’l figliuolo dell’umana generazione rinasca...nel sangue” (Letter 259, IV, 102). Catherine wrote this letter to Tommaso D’Alviano. Noffke dates this letter between October and December 1377.

to and can bring each person to grow into greater conformity with God's will for him or her. For example, in writing to Gregory XI, Catherine makes known her perception of how God wills him to develop: "So my soul desires with inestimable love that God through His infinite mercy may remove from you every passion and tepidity of heart and reform you into another man, that is, with the reformation of burning and most blazing desire, because in any other way you would not be able to fulfill the will of God and His desire for His servants."³²⁰

Catherine is convinced that God has a particular will for each person and each person can choose to respond or not to that will. The process of renewal depends on both God's help and the person's cooperation. Even in cooperating with God, however, the individual depends on God's grace. The blood, which testifies to God's desire for each person, contains the grace needed for each person to fulfill that desire. The blood, which makes this appropriation possible, is readily available to the believer; as she states in *Il Dialogo*, "The blood is ours."³²¹

Just as Catherine explains the objective reality of the redemption with the analogy of the bridge, so she also interprets the subjective appropriation of the redemption through the same symbol. Catherine maintains that even though Jesus' physical presence has ended, He continues to be the bridge to God by "the way of His teaching."³²²

This teaching of Christ is not only the instruction preserved in the Scriptures. The teaching is also the living instruction of the Spirit: "As He was raised on high and returned to Me, the Father, I sent the Teacher, that is, the Holy Spirit, who came with My power and with the wisdom of My Son, and with the mercy of this Holy Spirit. He is one with Me, the Father, and with My Son. So He strengthened the way of teaching which My Truth left in the world."³²³ Each person of the Trinity aids the individual to follow the way of Christ's teaching: the Father through power, the Son through wisdom, and the Holy Spirit through clemency.³²⁴

³²⁰ "Però desidera l'anima con inestimabile amore che Dio per la sua infinita misericordia vi tolga ogni passione e tiepidezza di cuore, e riformivi uno altro uomo, cioè di reformatione d'affocato e ardentissimo desiderio: chè in altro modo non potreste adempire la volontà di Dio e il desiderio de' servi suoi" (Letter 255, IV, 83-84). Noffke considers this letter to have been written between June 18 and 22, 1376.

³²¹ "Il sangue è nostro...." (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXIV, 427).

³²² "La via della dottrina sua...." (*Il Dialogo*, XXIX, 78).

³²³ "Levato in alto e tornato a me, Padre, Io mandai il Maestro, cioè lo Spirito santo, il quale venne con la potenza mia e con la sapienza del mio Figliuolo, e con la clemenza sua, d'esso Spirito santo. Egli è una cosa con meco Padre e col Figliuolo mio. Unde fortificò la via della dottrina che lassò la mia Verità nel mondo" (*Il Dialogo*, XXIX, 77).

³²⁴ "So first I made for you the bridge of My Son, actually conversing with people, as I said. And when the bridge of His presence was lifted, the bridge and the way of teaching remained, as I told

While Jesus is no longer physically present on the earth, spiritually He remains the bridge by which the individual goes to God. Catherine envisions the progressive interiorization of redemption in terms of stairs in Jesus' body by which a person climbs to the bridge. These stairs are built on the cross. The first stair is Jesus' nailed feet. Just as the body moves by means of its feet, so the spiritual feet carry the soul's affection. The soul climbs from the feet to the side where he or she can see the opened heart. Seeing the heart the soul has the awareness of being loved. Climbing to the mouth, the soul tastes peace.³²⁵

you, the teaching being joined with My power, with the wisdom of the Son and with the mercy of the Holy Spirit. This power gives the virtue of fortitude to whoever follows this way. Wisdom gives him light that on this way he may know the truth. And the Holy Spirit gives him love that consumes and takes away every sensitive love from the soul and only the love of virtue remains in him. So that in everything, whether actually present or through teaching, He is the way and the truth and the life, which is the way which the bridge leads you to the height of heaven." "Si che in prima Io vi feci il ponte del mio Figliuolo, attualmente, come detto ò, conversando con gli uomini; e levato il ponte attuale, rimase il ponte e la via della dottrina, come detto è, essendo la dottrina unita con la potenza mia, con la sapienza del Figliuolo e con la clemenza dello Spirito santo. Questa potenza dà virtù di fortezza a chi seguita questa via; la sapienza gli dà lume che in essa via cognosce la verità, e lo Spirito santo gli dà amore, il quale consuma e toglie ogni amore sensitivo dell'anima, e solo gli rimane l'amore delle virtù. Si che in ogni modo, o attuale o per dottrina, egli è via e verità e vita, la quale via è il ponte che vi conduce all'altezza del cielo" (*Il Dialogo*, XXIX, 79).

³²⁵ "This bridge, My only-begotten Son, has three stairs in it. Two of these were built upon the wood of the most holy cross. And also the third one [He built] as He felt great bitterness when He was given to drink gall and vinegar. In these three stairs you will recognize three steps of the soul, which I will make clear to you as follows. The first stair is the feet, which signify the affections, because as the feet carry the body, so the affection carries the soul. The nailed feet are a stair for you in order that you be able to arrive at His side, which shows you the secret of the heart. For, having climbed up on the feet of affection, the soul begins to taste the affection of the heart, setting the eye of affection in the open heart of My Son, where one finds the consummate and indescribable love. I say consummate because He does not love you for His own benefit, because you were not able to do Him any benefit because He is one with Me. Then the soul was filled with love, seeing how much she was loved. Having climbed up to the second she reaches the third, that is, to the mouth, where she finds peace from the great war which before she had through her sins. By the first step, raising the feet of the affection from the earth, she is stripped of vice, on the second she is clothed with virtue. On the third she tasted peace. So the bridge has three stairs. Climbing the first and the second, you are able to arrive at the last." "Questo ponte, unigenito mio Figliuolo, à in sè tre scale, delle quali le due furono fabbricate in sul legno della santissima croce, e la terza anco senti la grande amaritudine quando gli fu dato bere fiele e aceto. In questi tre scaloni cognoscerai tre stati dell'anima, i quali Io ti dichiarerò di sotto. Il primo scalone sono i piei, i quali significano l'affetto; però che, come i piei portano il corpo, così l'affetto porta l'anima. I piei confitti ti sono scalone acciò che tu possa giognere al costato, il quale ti manifesta il segreto del cuore. Però che, salito in su' piei de l'affetto, l'anima comincia a gustare l'affetto del cuore ponendo l'occhio de l'intelletto nel cuore aperto del mio Figliuolo, dove truova consumato ed ineffabile amore. Consumato dico, chè non v'ama per propria utilità, però che utilità a lui non potete fare, però che egli è una cosa con meco. Allora l'anima s'empie d'amore, vedendosi tanto amare. Salito al secondo giogne al terzo, cioè alla bocca, dove truova la

To cross over the river by way of the bridge, it is necessary to climb the stairs, which some people do imperfectly, some perfectly, and some with great perfection.³²⁶ Those on the first step struggle with their imperfection. Some of these are not able to remain on the first step because their relation to God never goes beyond servile fear. They never come to the secret of the heart.³²⁷ Those on the first step, who move beyond servile fear and who can be called "faithful servants," still need to move beyond loving God for their own benefit, which is a "mercenary love."³²⁸

As the soul continues its progress, by the nailed feet of Jesus,³²⁹ it moves beyond even this self-centered love and grows in virtue.³³⁰ The second stair is characterized by the awareness of being loved. In the disclosure of the secret of the heart

pace della grande guerra che prima aveva avuta per le colpe sue. Per lo primo scalone, levando i piedi dell'affetto dalla terra, si spogliò del vizio, nel secondo si vesti d'amore con virtù, e nel terzo gustò la pace. Si che il ponte à tre scaloni, acciò che salendo il primo e 'l secondo potiate giognere all'ultimo" (*Il Dialogo*, XXVI, 69-70). For a similar use of this analogy, see Letter 120.

³²⁶ "I told you that no one was able to go by the way of the bridge and to escape from the river who did not climb the stairs. And such is the truth, and some go imperfectly, and some perfectly, and some with great perfection." "Io ti dissi che niuno poteva andare per lo ponte e escire del fiume che non salisse i tre scaloni. E così è la verità, che salgono chi imperfettamente e chi perfettamente e chi con grande perfezione" (*Il Dialogo*, LIX, 150).

³²⁷ "Every small wind makes them set sail and turn back, because they have climbed and taken the first step of Christ crucified imperfectly and so they do not come to the second, that of the heart." "Ogni piccolo vento li fa andare a vela e voltare il capo a dietro, perchè imperfettamente àno salito e preso il primo scalone di Cristo crocifisso, e però non giogono al secondo del cuore" (*Il Dialogo*, LIX, 151).

³²⁸ "There are certain ones who become faithful servants, that is, who serve Me faithfully without servile fear, not serving through fear of punishment alone, but they serve with love. This love, that is, to serve for one's own benefit or delight or the pleasure that they may find in me, is imperfect." "Alquanti sono che son fatti servi fedeli, cioè che fedelmente mi servono senza timore servile, servendo solo per timore della pena, ma servono con amore. Questo amore, cioè di servire per propria utilità o per diletto, o per piacere che truovino in me, è imperfetto" (*Il Dialogo*, LX, 151-152).

³²⁹ "Having climbed the first, that is with the feet fixed and nailed on the cross, you will find the affection stripped of its disordered love." "Essendo saliti il primo, cioè co' piedi confitti e chiavellati in croce, troverete l'affetto spogliato del suo disordinato amore" (Letter 120, II, 194). This letter was written in late September 1377.

³³⁰ "And every other thirst is extinguished and dead in him. And he goes securely without any servile fear, having climbed the first step of affection. Because the affection, having stripped itself of selfish love, climbs over itself and transitory things, loving and keeping them, if he wishes to keep them, through Me and not without Me, that is, with holy and true fear and love of virtue." "Ed ogni altra sete è spenta e morta in loro; e va sicuramente senza alcuno timore servile, salito lo scalone primo dell'affetto. Perché l'affetto, spogliatosi del proprio amore, saglie sopra di sè e sopra le cose transitorie, amandole e tenendole, se egli le vuole tenere, per me e non senza me, cioè con santo e vero timore ed amore della virtù" (*Il Dialogo*, LIV, 143).

of Christ, the individual grows in appreciation of the extent of God's love.³³¹ While God's love encompasses humanity in general, it is also focused on each individual in a particular sense: "Then [the individual] realizes he has climbed to the second stair, that is, to the light of the understanding. This one reflects himself in My heartfelt love, in Christ crucified."³³²

As he or she moves to the second stair, growing in appreciation of God's love, he or she becomes the friend of God.³³³ At the second stair, God manifests secrets to the friend, who becomes another self: "This is the condition of the dearest friend, for they are two bodies and one soul through the affection of love because love transforms itself into what is loved. If he is made one soul, nothing can be secret to him."³³⁴

The final step, at the mouth, is that of the child who dwells in the peace of God's love.³³⁵ This is the perfect stage in which the soul rests,³³⁶ absorbed in the

³³¹ "Arriving at the second, that is, at the open side of Christ crucified, you will see the secret of the heart, with such ineffable love He has bathed us with His blood. He climbs onto the first, and strips himself of affection. In the second he tastes the love which he finds in the open heart of Christ." "Giugnendo al secondo, cioè al costato aperto di Cristo crocifisso, e vedrete il secreto del cuore; con quanto amore ineffabile ci ha fatto bagno del sangue suo. Nel primo si leva, e si spoglia l'affetto, nel secondo gusta l'amore che trova nel cuore aperto di Cristo" (Letter 120, II, 194).

³³² "Allora si truova salito il secondo scalone, cioè al lume de l'intelletto, il quale si specula nell'amore cordiale di me, in Cristo crocifisso" (*Il Dialogo*, LIV, 143).

³³³ "First he was imperfect, being in servile fear, exercising it and persevering, he came to the love of the delight and of his own benefit, finding delight and benefit in Me. This is the way and through this, one passes who desires to arrive at perfect love, that is, to the love of the friend and of the child. I tell you that filial love is perfect, because in the love of the child he receives the inheritance from Me, the Eternal Father. And because the love of the child is not without the love of a friend, I said that from the friend he was made a child." "Imprima era imperfetto, essendo nel timore servile; esercitandosi e perseverando venne all'amore del diletto e della propria utilità, trovando diletto e utilità in me. Questa è la via, e per questa passa colui che desidera di giognere all'amore perfetto, cioè ad amore d'amico e di figliuolo. Dico che l'amore filiale è perfetto, però che nell'amore del figliuolo riceve la eredità di me, Padre eterno. E perchè amore di figliuolo non è senza l'amore de l'amico, e però ti dissi che d'amico era fatto figliuolo" (*Il Dialogo*, LXIII, 159-160).

³³⁴ "Questa è la condizione del carissimo amico: che sono due corpi e una anima per affetto d'amore, perchè l'amore si trasforma nella cosa amata. Se egli è fatto una anima, niuna cosa gli può essere secreta" (*Il Dialogo*, LX, 155-156). Thomas describes love as creating another self: "Union pertains to love, as much as the delight of the one loving has toward that which he loves, as though toward himself or toward part of himself. And so it is evident that love is not the very relation of union but union is a consequence of love." "Unio pertinet ad amorem, in quantum per complacentiam appetitus amans se habet ad id quod amat, sicut ad seipsum vel ad aliquid sui. Et sic patet quod amor non est ipsa relatio unionis, sed unio est consequens amorem" (S.T., I, II, 26, 2 ad 2).

³³⁵ "Seeing the third step and arriving at the mouth of the Son of God, he [the soul] is nourished, himself in peace." "Vedendo il terzo scaglione, e giugnendo cioè alla bocca del Figliuolo di Dio, nutricarsi nella pace" (Letter 120, II, 194).

³³⁶ "Since we have known and knew the divine goodness, we will arrive at the peace of the mouth:

appreciation of the goodness of God: "So the soul, having come to the third stage of perfect love, when it receives My gifts and graces, does not consider only the gift, but gazes with the eye of the understanding at the affection of the charity of Me, the Giver."³³⁷

Catherine explains the three stairs as the employment of the three powers of the soul to fulfill the two great commandments and thus reach the full interiorization of redemption. She writes: "So the memory retains My blessings and My goodness in itself. The understanding gazes into the indescribable love which I showed to you by means of My only-begotten Son, who is set as an object to the eye of your understanding in order that you may contemplate in Him the fire of My charity. And the will then may be gathered into them, loving and desiring Me who is its end."³³⁸

While Catherine uses this analogy of the bridge only in certain of her writings, the fundamental principles underlying the analogy pervade all of her writings. Catherine repeatedly comes back to the principle that progress in conformity with God is accomplished through a growing realization of being loved.³³⁹ The appreciation of

There we taste such peace and quiet that, as a thing lifted on high, no bitterness which may come is able to affect us. He is that peaceful bed where the soul reposes. And so I said that I desired to see you placed on the table of the most holy cross." "Poi che abbiamo cognosciuto noi e cognosciuto la bontà sua, e noi gioigneremo alla pace della bocca: ine gusta tanta pace e quiete che, come cosa levata in alto, niuna amaritudine che venga gli può agiugnere. Egli è quello letto pacifico dove si riposa l'anima. E però dissi ch'io desideravo di vedervi posto in sulla mensa della santissima croce" (Letter 74, II, 11). This letter was written to Frate Niccolò da Montalcino. St. Augustine also refers to the "table of the cross": "For the table of delight is the Passion of Christ, who offered Himself as a sacrifice to God the Father for us on the table of the cross." "Mensa namque jucunditatis passio Christi est, qui se pro nobis in mensa crucis obtulit sacrificium Deo Patri" ("Sermo CCCLXVII"; PL 39, 1649).

³³⁷ "Cosi l'anima, giunta al terzo stato de l'amore perfetto, quando riceve i doni e le grazie mie non riguarda solamente il dono, ma riguarda con l'occhio de l'intelletto l'affetto della carità di me donatore" (*Il Dialogo*, LXXII, 187).

³³⁸ "[S]i che la memoria ritenga i benefizi miei e la mia bontà in sè; lo 'ntelletto raguardi nell'amore ineffabile il quale Io ò mostrato a voi col mezzo de l'unigenito mio Figliuolo, il quale ò posto per obietto all'occhio de l'intelletto vostro acciò che in lui raguardi il fuoco della mia carità, e la volontà allora sia congregata in loro, amando e desiderando me che so' suo fine" (*Il Dialogo*, LIV, 142).

³³⁹ "Every perfection and every virtue proceeds from charity. And charity is nurtured by humility. And humility flows from the knowledge and holy hatred of oneself, that is, of one's selfish sensuality. It is necessary that whoever comes there be persevering and stays in the cell of the knowledge of herself. In this knowledge of herself, she will know My mercy in the blood of My only-begotten Son, drawing to herself with His affection My divine charity, exercising herself in tearing up every perverse spiritual and material will, hiding herself in her house." "Ogni perfezione ed ogni virtù procede dalla carità, e la carità è nutrita da l'umiltà, e l'umiltà esce del cognoscimento e odio santo di sè medesimo, cioè della propria sensualità. Chi ci giogne conviene che sia perseverante e stia nella cella del cognoscimento di sè, nel quale cognoscimento di sè conoscerà la misericordia mia nel sangue de

being loved spurs a progressive movement from imperfect self-centered love to a generous love that imitates God's love.

This realization of being loved comes about through continuous prayer. "Continuous prayer" includes actual prayer but it also denotes a general attitude of openness to God. Continuous prayer is the soul's desire for God which is grounded in the knowledge of oneself and of God's goodness. She describes the soul that lives in continuous prayer:

Not only with bodily vigil, but with intellectual vigil...digging out with hatred the thoughts of the heart, staying awake in the affection of my charity, knowing that I do not want other than her sanctification. This is certified for you in the blood of My Son. Since the eye is awake in the knowledge of Me and of herself, she prays continually: that is the prayer of the holy and good will. This is continuous prayer.³⁴⁰

Self-knowledge and continuous prayer are essential for this process. By this means, the individual's relationship with God is rooted in the awareness of his or her dependence on the Creator not only for the gift of creation but also for the gift of re-creation in Jesus' blood. She writes: "In the knowledge of yourself you will humble yourself, seeing yourself as not existing through yourself, and you will know that your being is from Me, for I have loved you before you were. And through the ineffable love which I had for you, wishing you to be re-created to grace, I have washed you and re-created you in the blood of My only-begotten Son, shed with such a fire of love."³⁴¹

Through continual prayer made in the knowledge of self and of God, the soul realizes that Jesus' death on the cross is not just Jesus' historical victory over the power of evil but the present vital source of God's life within her or him. Jesus is the living source who makes the progression from imperfection to perfection possible:

Truly He is a fountain, for, as a fountain holds in itself water and overflows through the wall around, so is this sweet and loving Word, clothed with our humanity. His humanity was a wall which held in itself the Eternal Deity joined to His humanity,

l'unigenito mio Figliuolo, tirando a sè con l'affetto suo la divina mia carità, esercitandosi in stirpare ogni perversa volontà spirituale e temporale, nascondendosi nella casa sua" (*Il Dialogo*, LXIII, 160).

³⁴⁰ "E non solamente con la vigilia corporale, ma con la vigilia intellettuale...stirpando con odio le cogitazioni del cuore; veghiando ne l'affetto della mia carità, cognoscendo che Io non voglio altro che la sua santificazione. Questo v'è certificato nel sangue del mio Figliuolo. Poi che l'occhio veghia nel cognoscimento di me e di sè, òra continuamente: ciò è orazione di santa e buona volontà. Questa è orazione continua" (*Il Dialogo*, LXIII, 162-163).

³⁴¹ "Nel cognoscimento di te ti umilierai, vedendo te per te non essere, e l'essere tuo cognoscerai da me, che v'ò amati prima che voi fuste. E per l'amore ineffabile che Io v'ebbi, volendovi ricreare a grazia, v'ò lavati e ricreati nel sangue de l'unigenito mio Figliuolo, sparto con tanto fuoco d'amore" (*Il Dialogo*, IV, 10). For other references to being re-created to grace, see *Il Dialogo*, XV, XCVI, CX.

with the fire of the divine charity overflowing through the opened wall of Christ crucified because His most sweet wounds poured blood soaked with the fire since through the fire of love it was shed. We draw from this fountain the water of grace because in the power of the Godhead, and not only through the humanity, the fault of humanity was cleansed.... So truly He is the fountain of living water and, with great tenderness, He invites us to drink from it. He says, "Whoever thirsts, come to me and drink."³⁴²

Crucial to the process of appropriation of the mystery of redemption is the realization that the individual's personal struggle with sin can be resolved in Christ. Jesus' death brought forgiveness and healing not only for the sin of Adam but for those who ask for mercy for their personal sins. In *Il Dialogo*, Catherine depicts the Father saying:

As many times as a man might offend, he may find perfect satisfaction, wanting to return to Me in this life, because He united the divine nature with your human nature. Through this union you have received perfect satisfaction. My Providence did this with finite work because the suffering of the cross was finite in the Word but you have received infinite fruit in the power of the Godhead.³⁴³

The infinite healing power of the blood gives the continual assurance of a relationship with God.³⁴⁴

³⁴² "Veramente egli è una fonte: chè, come la fonte tiene in se l'acqua e trabocca per lo murello d'intorno; così questo dolce e amoroso Verbo, vestito della nostra umanità; l'umanità sua fu uno muro che tenne in se la deità eterna unita in essa umanità; traboccando il fuoco della divina carità per lo muro aperto di Cristo crocifisso: però che le piaghe sue dolcissime versarono sangue intriso col fuoco, perchè per fuoco d'amore fu sparto. Di questa fonte traiamo noi l'acqua della Grazia; però che in virtù della deità, e non puramente per l'umanità, fu purgata la colpa dell'uomo.... Sicchè veramente egli è fonte d'acqua viva, e con gran dolcezza d'amore c'invita a berne. Ma dice: 'Chi ha sete; venga a me, e beva'" (Letter 318, V, 51). This letter was written to Sano di Maco. Noffke believes that this letter was written between January 15 and 31, 1379.

³⁴³ "[E] tanto quanto offendesse l'uomo, trovasse perfetta soddisfazione, volendo ritornare a me nella vita sua - unii, la natura divina con la natura vostra umana, per la quale unione avete ricevuta soddisfazione perfetta. Questo à fatto la mia providenzia, che con l'operazione finita - chè finita fu la pena della croce nel Verbo - avete ricevuto frutto infinito in virtù della Deità" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXV, 432).

³⁴⁴ "The fruit that came out of the suffering and the desire for your salvation is infinite, and so you receive it infinitely. For if it had not remained infinite, it would not have restored the whole human race, that is, present, past, and to come. Nor would the person who offends even be able to be raised up again after the sin, if this baptism of blood were not given to you infinitely, that is, unless the fruit of the blood were infinite." "Ma il frutto che esci dalla pena e il desiderio della vostra salute è infinito, e però el ricevete infinitamente. Però che, se egli non fosse stato infinito, non sarebbe restituita tutta l'umana generazione, cioè i presenti, i passati e gli a venire. Né anco l'uomo che offende, dopo la colpa non si potrebbe rilevare, se questo battesimo del sangue non vi fosse dato infinito, cioè che il frutto del sangue fosse infinito" (*Il Dialogo*, LXXV, 195).

So confident is Catherine in the healing power of the blood that she is even willing to accept the possibility, suggested to her by a religious person in Florence, that her life, especially her fasting, might be a delusion based on her own will rather than God's. She affirms that she always feared such a delusion but asserts that, even if this were true, her hope of salvation is not in her own strength but in the power of Christ. She writes: "But I then turn again and lean on the tree of the most holy cross of Christ crucified, and there I wish to be embedded, and I do not doubt that if I will be fixed and nailed with Him through love and with profound humility, the devils may not bear against me, not through my power but through the power of Christ crucified."³⁴⁵

Christ's blood is the source of continuous forgiveness but His blood also enables individuals to escape the power of sin in their lives:

This sweet and enamored Lamb, the Word incarnate, gives us encouragement because from Him comes every encouragement. For He has come as our captain, and with an unarmed hand, fixed and nailed to the cross, He has defeated our enemies and His blood has remained on the field to enliven us knights, to fight courageously and without any fear. The devil has become impotent through the blood of this Lamb, because he is not able to do more than God permits, and God does not permit that he may put on us a greater burden than we are able to carry. The flesh is defeated with the whippings and torments of Christ; and the world [is defeated] with the shame, the mockery, the abuse, and the insults; and riches [are defeated] with the voluntary poverty of Christ crucified.³⁴⁶

For Catherine, the basis of all sin is selfish self-love: "You know that every evil is founded in the selfish love of oneself."³⁴⁷ Christ conquers not only specific sins but the foundation of sin, the selfish love that is oriented away from God: "This gentle

³⁴⁵ "Ma io mi rivolgo poi e apogio mi all'alboro della santissima croce di Cristo crocifisso, e ine mi voglio conficare; e non dubito che, s'io sarò confitta e chiavellata con lui per amore e con profonda umiltà, che le dimonia non potranno contra di me, non per mia virtù, ma per la virtù di Cristo crocifisso" (Letter 92, II, 87). See DT XIX. Noffke holds for a time between July 1375 and early 1376.

³⁴⁶ "Questo dolce e innamorato Agnello, Verbo incarnato, ci dà conforto; però che da lui viene ogni conforto. Perocchè egli è venuto, come nostro capitano, e con la mano disarmata, confitta e chiavellata in croce, ha sconfitti e' nemici nostri; e 'l sangue è rimasto in sul campo per animare noi, cavalieri, a combattere virilmente e senza alcuno timore. Il dimonio è diventato impotente per lo sangue di questo Agnello; perocchè non ci può fare più che Dio permetta, e Dio non permette che ci sia posto maggior peso che noi possiamo portare. La carne è sconfitta co' flagelli e tormenti di Cristo; e il mondo coll'obbrobrio, scherni, villanie, e vituperio; e la ricchezza con la povertà volontaria di Cristo crocifisso" (Letter 114, II, 175-176). This letter was written to Agnolino di Giovanni Salimbeni, the leader of a powerful family of Siena. Noffke dates this letter around April 1377.

³⁴⁷ "Tu sai che ogni male è fondato nell'amore proprio di sè" (*Il Dialogo*, LI, 135). For another reference to selfish self-love, see *Il Dialogo*, XVII.

sweet Word, Christ crucified, casts such heat and light, that it dries up the dampness of selfish love and with His light He dissolves the darkness."³⁴⁸

Self-love is selfish when one's life is oriented away from love of God and neighbor and centered on oneself. Genuine self-love is loving oneself in the light of God's goodness: "He sees that God loves him supremely, looking upon himself in the fountain of the sea of the divine essence. Then the desire disposes him to love himself in God and God in himself, just as the one who looks into the fountain, sees there his image. Seeing himself, he loves himself and is delighted."³⁴⁹

Catherine asserts that, while the soul's weakness lies in the sensual aspect of the human nature, the reason is fortified by Christ's blood: "You are weak and fragile according to a sensual aspect, but according to reason and the fortitude of the spirit it is not so, for in the blood of Christ we are fortified. Weakness remains only in the sensual aspect....Since the reason is strengthened in the blood of Christ, we ought to drown ourselves in this sweet and glorious ransom."³⁵⁰ The soul in this process of appropriating the redemption experiences an increasing conformity with God that even affects the natural rebellion of the body.³⁵¹

³⁴⁸ "Questo dolce Verbo Cristo crocifisso getta tanto calore e lume, che disecca l'umido dell'amore proprio, e col lume suo dissolve la tenebra" (Letter 343, V, 142). This letter was written to Rainaldo da Capua.

³⁴⁹ "Vede che sommamente Dio l'ama, ragguardandosi sè nella fonte del mare della divina essentia. Allora el desiderio si dispone ad amare sè in Dio e Dio in sè, si come colui che ragguarda nella fonte, che vi vede la imagine sua: vedendosi, si ama, e si diletta" (Letter 226, III, 297). Noffke dates this letter about February 17, 1376.

³⁵⁰ "[T]u se' debile e fragile sicondo la sensualità, ma sicondo la ragione e la fortezza dello spirito non è cosi; però che nel sangue di Cristo siamo fortificati: solo la debilezza sta nella sensualità...poi chè la ragione è fortificata nel sangue di Cristo, ci dobbiamo anegare in questo dolce e glorioso prezo" (Letter 195, III, 158). Noffke dates the letter between December 20, 1378, and February 28, 1379. Stefano Maconi was Catherine's age. He first came to her as a result of his involvement in a feud that she resolved. He frequently served as her secretary.

³⁵¹ "You, then, You, gentle Word, have strengthened our weak nature through the union that You have made in us. Through this union our nature is strengthened because in the power of the blood this weakness is taken away in holy baptism. And when we have come to the age of discretion we are strengthened by Your teaching. For the person who follows it in truth, clothing himself with it perfectly, has become strong and so inclined to good that he almost loses the rebelliousness of the flesh against the spirit, for that soul is perfectly united in Your teaching, and the body with the soul, and so it wants to follow the affection of the soul." "Tu, dunque, tu dolce Verbo hai fortificata la debile natura nostra per l'unione che tu hai fatta in noi. Per questa unione è fortificata la natura nostra, però che in virtù del sangue tuo si tolle questa debilezza nel santo battesimo; e quando siamo giunti a l'eta della discrezione siamo fortificati dalla dottrina tua, però che l'uomo che la seguita in verità, vestendosene perfettamente, tanto diventa forte e atto al bene che quasi perde la rebellion della carne contra lo spirito; perché quella anima è perfettamente unita nella dottrina tua, e il corpo con l'anima, e però vuole seguitare l'affetto de l'anima" (*Oratio IX*, 98-100). For Catherine's prayer on the strength given by God's help, see *Oratio XX*.

While affirming the power of the blood, Catherine maintains the independence of the will to accept or to reject the blood. The individual has the responsibility to ask for the grace of God, especially as he or she experiences his or her own resistance to grace: "With the hand of free will, his misery and hardness set the stone of diamond in his heart, which cannot be broken unless it is broken with blood. Indeed I tell you, while he has time and is able to use his free will, not hindered by his hardness, asking the blood of My Son, with the same hand, let him place it upon the hardness of his heart. It will break it and he will receive the fruit of the blood which was paid for him."³⁵² The blood has the power to change a heart that is as hard as diamond, if a person freely chooses to place the blood on his or her heart.

While strengthening the will's resistance to sin, the blood rectifies the person's conscience.³⁵³ In order to function correctly, the conscience must continually adhere to the spiritual power of the blood: "Give this dog of your conscience to eat the fire of most burning charity, and to drink of the blood of the immaculate Lamb, opened on the cross, who, from every part of his body, pours blood."³⁵⁴

Catherine identifies the Holy Spirit as continually healing the soul's weakness and strengthening it in its struggles:

For man, while he lives in the corruptible prison of his body, which is a perverse law that always invites and inclines him to sin, the gentle and good God has placed this continuous remedy, which fortifies the reason and the liberty of man. That is the continuous medicine of the fire of the Holy Spirit, that He never takes away. He continually applies His graces and gifts, so much that every day you ought to

³⁵² "[L]a miseria e durizia sua, il quale à posta con la mano del libero arbitrio in sul cuore la pietra del diamante, che se non si rompe col sangue non si può rompere. Anco ti dico che, non obstante la durizia sua, mentre che egli à il tempo e può usare il libero arbitrio, chiedendo il sangue del mio Figliuolo, e con essa medesima mano el ponga sopra la durizia del cuore suo, lo spezzerà e riceverà il frutto del sangue che è pagato per lui" (*Il Dialogo*, IV, 13-14). In *Il Dialogo*, page 14, note 17, Cavallini points out a probable source for this idea in Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum naturale* I, VII, c.39, where goat's blood is reputed to have power to break diamonds. Catherine may have heard this idea through the Dominicans. For another reference to the free will, see Letter 343.

³⁵³ "Therefore the blood is not without fire, rather it is soaked with the fire of divine charity because it was shed for love, so the fire with the blood washes and consumes the rust of sin which is in the conscience. This fault is the worm which gnaws in her conscience." "E perchè il sangue non è senza fuoco, anco è intriso col fuoco della divina carità (perocchè fu sparto per amore); sicchè il fuoco col sangue lava e consuma la ruggine della colpa, che è nella coscienza: la quale colpa è uno vermine che rode in essa coscienza" (Letter 80, II, 35). This letter was sent to the Augustinian, Frate Giovanni Tantucci. Noffke places this letter between May 22 and 31, 1378. Tantucci was one of the three to whom she committed the care of her writings. For another reference to the blood and the conscience, see *Il Dialogo*, CXXIX.

³⁵⁴ "Dàgli mangiare a questo tuo cane della coscienza fuoco di ardentissima carità, e bere del sangue dell'Agnello immacolato, aperto in croce, il quale da ogni parte del corpo suo versa sangue" (Letter 114, II, 175). This letter was sent to nuns of an unnamed monastery.

employ this holy and sweet baptism, which was given as a gift and not because of obligation.³⁵⁵

In the power of the crucified Christ, the soul has strength to act virtuously. Catherine constantly challenges her disciples to take action with the confidence of God's help, as she does, for example, with Frate Bartolomeo Dominici: "Do everything bravely, drive away the darkness and build the light, not considering your weakness, but think that through Christ crucified, you are able to do everything."³⁵⁶

Struggles contribute to the process of salvation. Catherine considers temptations to be the daily fare of all those who seek to follow Christ. Christians are knights whose labor entails battles: "You know that with perseverance and with the battle one receives the victory. We are put in this life as on a battlefield, and we ought to fight manfully and not loathe the blows nor turn the head back, but gaze upon our captain, Christ crucified who always persevered."³⁵⁷

Temptations are part of God's providential plan to bring the soul closer to the divine will. Virtue grows as a person grows in self-knowledge and in knowledge of God's goodness, which happens especially during times of temptation. The Father declares in *Il Dialogo*: "And I permit it through love and not through hatred that you may conquer and not be conquered, and that you may come to a perfect knowledge of Me and of yourselves and in order that your virtue may be proved because it is not proved except through its contrary."³⁵⁸

Since God has specific desires for each person, the human person interacts with God's providential care working towards the individual's salvation. The Father explains: "So in every state and in every time souls will be pleasing to Me, provided

³⁵⁵ "E perchè l'uomo, mentre che vive nella carcere corruttibile del corpo suo, el quale è una legge perversa che sempre lo 'nvita e inchina a peccato, à posto el dolce e buono Dio questo continuo remedio, el quale fortifica la ragione e libertà dell'uomo, cioè di questa continua medicina del fuoco dello Spirito santo, che non gli è mai tolto, anco aduopera continuamente le gratie e doni suoi, in tanto che ogni di puoi e debbi operare questo santo e dolce battesmo, el quale t'è dato per gratia e non per debito" (Letter 189, III, 138). This letter was sent to the Benedictine monks at Cervaia, in the vicinity of Genoa, and to some monks of Mont' Oliveto Maggiore near Siena.

³⁵⁶ "Mettetevi virilmente a fare ogni cosa, e cacciare le tenebre e fondare la luce, non ragguardando alla vostra debilezza: ma pensate per Cristo crocifisso potere ogni cosa" (Letter 200, III, 180). Frate Bartolomeo Dominici was giving the Lenten preaching in Asciano at the time of this letter. Noffke places this letter in late March 1372.

³⁵⁷ "Sapete che con la perseveranzia e con la battaglia si riceve vittoria. Noi siamo in questa vita posti come in uno campo di battaglia, e dobbiamo combattere virilmente e none schifare e' colpi nè volgere il capo adrieto, ma ragguardare il nostro capitano Cristo crocifisso che sempre perseverò" (Letter 159, III, 22). Noffke believes that this letter to Frate Raniere of the Dominican Church of Santa Caterina in Pisa was written between or near Holy Week, April 6 and 12, 1376.

³⁵⁸ "Ed Io el permetto per amore e non per odio, perchè vinciate e non siate vinti, e perchè veniate a perfetto cognoscimento di me e di voi à e acciò che la virtù sia provata, però che ella non si pruova se non per lo suo contrario" (*Il Dialogo*, XL, 110-111).

that the eye of the understanding never shuts off the light of faith from the object of My Eternal Truth, with the affection of love. This is because I am the doctor and you are the sick. And I give to everyone that which is necessary and needed for your salvation, and to increase the perfection in your soul."³⁵⁹

Even the awareness of one's own habitual resistance to grace heightens the appreciation of God's goodness to the soul and incites the soul to growth in virtue:

What is necessary for us to know? The great goodness of God and His ineffable charity towards us; the perverse law which always fights against our spirit, and our misery. In this knowledge the soul begins to render its debt to God, that is, the glory and praise of His name, loving Him above everything, and our neighbor as ourselves, with hunger and desire for virtue.... The soul acquires every virtue and grace in the knowledge of self.³⁶⁰

In addition to persevering in the struggle with sin, the Christian needs to cooperate with the redemption process by "following the footsteps" of Christ. Not only did Jesus' death give human actions the power of virtue, but Jesus remains the source of virtue: "From Him all the virtues have life. And so no one is able to have virtue that gives the life of grace unless from Him, that is, following His footsteps and His teaching. He has perfected the virtues."³⁶¹

Even as the soul must rely on grace, the soul must practice virtue by means of its free will, as Catherine explains: "He [Christ] wishes that we apply our free will, with a free choice employing the time in the exercise of the true virtues."³⁶² The specific actions needed to follow in the footsteps of Jesus are the works of virtue. Catherine affirms that one grows in virtue through the realization of the love of God manifested in Christ:

³⁵⁹ "Si che in ogni stato e in ogni tempo saranno piacevoli a me, pure che l'occhio de l'intelletto non si serri mai col lume della fede dall'obietto della mia Verità eterna, con affetto d'amore. Però che Io so' medico e voi infermi, e do a tutti quello che è di necessità e di bisogno alla vostra salute, e a crescere la perfezione nell'anima vostra" (*Il Dialogo*, XCI, 245).

³⁶⁰ "Che ci è bisogno cognoscere? La grande bontà di Dio e la ineffabile carità sua verso di noi; la legge perversa che sempre impugna contro lo spirito, e la nostra miseria. In questo cognoscimento l'anima comincia a rendere il debito suo a Dio, cioè la gloria e lode al nome suo, amando lui sopra ogni cosa, e 'l prossimo come sè medesimo; con fame e desiderio delle virtù.... Ogni virtù e grazia acquista l'anima nel cognoscimento di sè" (Letter 266, IV, 135-136). Noffke dates this letter between August 15 and September 15, 1378. This letter was written to her friend, the lawyer in Florence, Ristoro Canigiani. Ristoro Canigiani's home was burned down in the uprising in Florence during which Catherine was almost killed by the mob.

³⁶¹ "Da lui àno vita tutte le virtù. E però niuno e può avere virtù che dia vita di grazia se non da lui, ciò è seguitando le vestigie e la dottrina sua. Egli à maturate le virtù" (*Il Dialogo*, XXVII, 73).

³⁶² "Ma vuole che noi ci mettiamo la volontà libera, col libero arbitrio esercitando il tempo con le vere virtù" (*Il Dialogo*, XXIII, 62).

You know that every virtue is acquired with the light and without this no virtue is able to be acquired, because every virtue has life from charity. This charity is a love because the soul with the light of faith, which is in the eye of the understanding, sees the ineffable love of God has for her. Seeing it, she knows the inestimable goodness of God and her own being loved by Him before she was. So she conceives a love, because with the light she sees that God is worthy of being loved, and that she is obliged to love Him because she owes it to Him.³⁶³

This debt of love is repaid through the loving exercise of the virtues. Virtuous actions, performed in union with God, are responses to the creation and "re-creation" God has accomplished: "So the virtues are a sign which shows that the soul is not unappreciative of being created in the image and likeness of God, and of the re-creation that she has received in the blood of the humble Lamb, re-creating her to grace."³⁶⁴

The virtues, even when they require human effort, are not the result of human effort only but are also given by grace: "The virtues have given life to you in the power of that blood."³⁶⁵ The virtues come from the side of Christ, symbolizing the relationship between the grace that enables the practice of virtue and the salvific sufferings of Jesus: "You draw this conduit of charity from the side of Christ."³⁶⁶

To impress upon her disciples the need to live in constant communion with Jesus in order to live virtuously, Catherine compares the soul's relationship to Christ to that of an infant with her or his mother: "Therefore we ought to attach ourselves to the breast of Christ crucified, in whom is the mother of charity, and with the

³⁶³ "Voi sapete che ogni virtù s'acquista col lume e senza esso niuna virtù si può acquistare, perchè ogni virtù ha vita dalla carità, la quale carità è uno amore; chè l'anima col lume della fede, il quale è nell'occhio dell'intelletto, vede l'amore ineffabile che Dio le ha; vedendolo, cognosce la inestimabile bontà di Dio e s'essere amata da lui prima che ella fosse; onde concipe uno amore, perchè col lume vide che Dio è degno d'essere amato, e che ella è obbligata ad amarlo per debito" (Misciattelli, VI, Letter XV, 36-37). See Gardner, VII, 418-419. This was one of the letters that Gardner found in the Biblioteca Casanatense. This letter was sent to Piero Canigiani. Gardner dates this letter in the latter part of 1379.

³⁶⁴ "Sicchè le virtù sono un segno che dimostrano che l'anima non sia sconosciuta d'essere creata all'immagine e similitudine di Dio, e della ricreazione che ha ricevuta nel sangue dell'umile Agnello, ricreandola a Grazia" (Letter 336, V, 112). This letter is addressed to the prioress and the nuns of the Dominican Monastery of Santa Agnesa at Monte Pulciano. Noffke dates this letter between April 20 and 29, 1379.

³⁶⁵ "Le virtù àno dato vita a voi in virtù d'esso sangue" (*Il Dialogo*, LXIV, 166). For other references to the relationship between the blood and virtues, see *Oratio* X, Letter 267, and Letter 355.

³⁶⁶ "Questo condotto della carità trarrete dal costato di Cristo crocifisso" (Letter 36, I, 142). This letter was sent to some novices of Monte Oliveto. Noffke dates this letter in Holy Week, April 6 and 12, 1376. In *Il Dialogo*, she shows the relationship between love and the other virtues: "For love is not alone, but is accompanied by all the true and actual virtues, because all the virtues have life from the love of charity." "E perchè l'amore non è solo, ma è accompagnato di tutte le vere e reali virtù, però che tutte le virtù àno vita da l'amore della carità" (*Il Dialogo*, CLIV, 523).

means of His flesh we will draw the milk which nourishes our soul, the children of the virtues, that is, by the means of the humanity of Christ because He fell in His humanity and suffered the pain but not in His divinity."³⁶⁷ The redeeming actions of Jesus not only remove sin and foster true virtue, but also perfect the soul through the seven gifts of the Spirit.³⁶⁸

When Catherine asked to suffer in order to atone for sin, the Father explained to her that suffering in itself is of little value. Virtuous actions have their value as they draw life from Christ:

And I say that it [sin] is punished with the suffering which is borne with desire, love, and contrition of heart, not through the power of the suffering but through the power of the desire of the soul, since the desire and every virtue has value and has life in itself through Christ crucified, My only begotten Son, inasmuch as the soul has drawn love from Him and with virtue follows His footsteps.³⁶⁹

Christ not only enables the individual to perform virtuous actions, but those human efforts are given infinite value: "Your good does not add any benefit to God nor your evil harm Him. But He is delighted that His creature produces the fruit of life, that you might receive infinite fruit from it and arrive at the end for which all of us have been created."³⁷⁰

³⁶⁷ "Perocchè ci dobbiamo attaccare al petto di Cristo crocifisso, in cui è la madre della carità; e col mezzo della carne sua trarremo il latte che nutrica l'anima nostra, e' figliuoli delle virtù: cioè per mezzo dell'umanità di Cristo; perocchè nell'umanità cadde, e sostenne, la pena, ma non nella deità" (Letter 86, II, 65-66). Catherine wrote this letter to the Abbess of the Monastery of Santa Maria delli Scalzi in Florence. Noffke places this letter between September 15 and November 30, 1379. For other uses of this image, see Letter 109 and Letter 288.

³⁶⁸ Catherine pictures the gifts of the Holy Spirit as plants watered by the blood. The Father states in *Il Dialogo*: "But I provided so that, sending into the world My Truth, the Word Incarnate, He took away the wilderness, drew out from it the thorns of original sin. And I made of it a garden watered with the blood of Christ crucified, planting there the plants of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, taking away the deadly sin." "Ma Io providdi che, mandando nel mondo la mia Verità, Verbo incarnato, gli tolse il salvaticume, trassene le spine del peccato originale; e fecilo uno giardino inaffiato del sangue di Cristo crocifisso, piantandovi le piante de' sette doni dello Spirito santo, traendone il peccato mortale" (*Il Dialogo*, CXL, 449). In *Il Dialogo*, CXL, Catherine relates the seven gifts with baptism. She asserts that the power of the free will is able to choose to abandon the seven gifts through selfish self-love and to fall into the seven capital sins.

³⁶⁹ "E dico che si punisce con la pena che si sostiene col desiderio, amore e contrizione del cuore, non per virtù della pena, ma per la virtù del desiderio dell'anima, siccome il desiderio ed ogni virtù vale ed à in sè vita per Cristo crocifisso unigenito mio Figliuolo, in quanto l'anima à tratto l'amore da lui e con virtù seguita le vestigie sue" (*Il Dialogo*, IV, 8-9).

³⁷⁰ "El tuo bene a Dio non fa utilità né il tuo male gli nuoce. Ben si diletta che la fattura sua produca frutto di vita, acciò che ne riceva frutto infinito e pervenga al fine per lo quale tutti ci ha create" (*Oratio* X, 112-114). For a reference to the effects of Christ's death on those who had already died, see *Il Dialogo*, XXX.

A gradual transformation takes place in the individual through contact with Christ in the sacraments, in prayer, and in following Him by virtuous actions. Those who have accepted Jesus' saving actions in their lives are "re-created": "And in knowing ourselves we find also the re-creation that God has made, re-creating us to grace in the blood of His only-begotten Son, which blood shows us the truth of God the Father."³⁷¹

Not only do those who accept Jesus' action become re-created in their human dignity, but they also take on the likeness of Christ. The opening chapter of *Il Dialogo* promises that one who follows Christ becomes another Christ: "Such prayer, exercised as we said, unites the soul in God, following the footsteps of Christ crucified. And so through desire, affection, and union, love makes of her another self.... It is the truth that through the affection of love the soul becomes another Him."³⁷² In another passage, the Father asserts that the individual shares God's nature not by the soul's own effort but through grace:

Beyond this knowing through the union which was made, she [the soul] is raised to a light, acquired not through nature...nor through her own exercise of virtue, but through grace given by My gentle Truth.... Then the affection that goes after the understanding is united with a most perfect and most burning love. And whoever asked Me who this soul is, I would say, she is another Me, made through the union of love.³⁷³

The truth of the Father, as described by Catherine with reference to our salvation, is God's desire in creating each person in order that she or he might share eternal life. This desire, which motivated the Incarnation and the death of Jesus, causes the transformation of the soul. Catherine exhibits this understanding as she begins a letter: "I, Catherine...write...with the desire to see you united and transformed in the fire of divine charity, which fire united God with humanity, and held Him fixed and nailed on the cross."³⁷⁴ The loving transformation which God accom-

³⁷¹ "E nel cognoscimento di noi troviamo ancora la recreazione che Dio ci fece, recreandoci a Grazia nel sangue dell'unigenito suo Figliuolo; il quale sangue ci manifesta la verità di Dio Padre" (Letter 102, II, 127). Noffke places this letter between December 15, 1379 and January 30, 1380.

³⁷² "[P]erò che l'orazione, esercitandola per lo modo detto, unisce l'anima in Dio seguitando le vestigie di Cristo crocifisso, e così per desiderio, affetto e unione l'amore ne fa un'altro sè.... È la verità che per affetto d'amore l'anima diventa un altro lui" (*Il Dialogo*, I, 2).

³⁷³ "Oltre a questo cognoscimento, per l'unione che à fatta, si leva a uno lume acquistato, non per natura...nè per sua propria virtù adoperata, ma per grazia data dalla mia dolce Verità.... Allora l'affetto che va dietro all'intelletto s'unisce con perfettissimo e ardentissimo amore, e chi dimandasse me chi è questa anima, direi: è un altro me, fatta per unione d'amore" (*Il Dialogo*, XCVI, 263).

³⁷⁴ "Io Catarina...scrivo...con desiderio di vedervi unito e trasformato nel fuoco della divina carità, il quale fuoco uni Dio coll'uomo, e tennelo confitto e chiavellato in croce" (Letter 342, V, 137). Catherine wrote this letter to Don Roberto da Napoli in late June 1375.

plishes in the soul is analogous to the action of fire that changes other things into fire.³⁷⁵

Catherine compares the transformation of the soul to the effect of a royal marriage where a servant becomes an empress not by her own right but by the dignity of her spouse.³⁷⁶ This transformation is not the entrance into a superior human mode of being and is more than a moral improvement. It is a sharing in God's life. Thus, Catherine prays:

You, the infinite One, make her [the soul] infinite through the conformity that You have made with her through grace in this life, while she is a pilgrim.... In everything the creature is conformed in You and You in the creature through grace. You do not give a part of grace but all of it. Why do I say all? Because she does not lack anything for her salvation. She is clearly more or less perfect according as in Your light she wants to exercise the natural light that You have given her. What more will I say? Nothing other than that You, God, made Yourself human and humanity is made God.³⁷⁷

Catherine inherited a tradition that viewed the process of salvation as a divinization, a gradual sharing in God's nature. In the Eastern part of the Church, the

³⁷⁵ "The condition of fire is to burn and to convert into itself that which approaches it. So the soul which considers the affection of his Creator, at once is drawn to love him and to convert his affection into him. There every dampness of selfish love of one's own self is consumed, and the soul takes the likeness of the fire of the Holy Spirit." "Però che condizione del fuoco è d'ardere e convertire in sè ciò che a lui s'accosta. Così l'anima che ragguarda l'affetto del suo Creatore, subito è tratta ad amarlo, e convertire l'affetto in lui. Ine si consuma ogni umido d'amore proprio di sè medesimo; e piglia la similitudine del fuoco dello Spirito Santo" (Letter 228, III, 305-306). Noffke dates this letter between February 25 and 28, 1376.

³⁷⁶ "A servant would be great who was taken as a bride by the emperor, for as soon as she is united with him, she becomes empress, not by herself, for she was a servant, but by the dignity of the emperor. So...the soul enamored with God, a servant and a slave bought back with the blood of the Son of God, comes to such dignity, that she is not able to call herself a servant but an empress, spouse of the eternal emperor." "Perchè sarebbe grande una serva che fusse presa per sposa dallo 'mperadore, chè, subito che ella è unita con lui, è fatta imperadrice, e non per sè, ch'ella era serva, ma per la dignità dello imperadore. Così...l'anima innamorata di Dio, che è serva e schiava ricomprata del sangue del Figliuolo di Dio, viene a tanta dignità, che ella non si può chiamare serva, ma imperadrice, sposa dello 'mperadore eterno" (Letter 29, I, 106). Catherine wrote this letter to Regina della Scala, the imperious wife of the leader of the Ghibelline party in Italy. Noffke asserts that the letter was sent between Advent 1375, and early January 1376. For a reference regarding the spousal relationship and Jesus' love on the cross, see Letter 217.

³⁷⁷ "Tu infinito la fai infinita per la conformità che tu hai fatta con lei per grazia in questa vita, mentre che è peregrina...che in tutto la creatura è conformata in te e tu in lei per grazia. Tu non le dà parte de la grazia, ma tutta. Perchè dico tutta? Perchè non le manca cavelle a la salute sua. Ben è meno e più perfetta secondo che nel lume tuo ella vuole esercitare el lume naturale che tu le hai dato. Che più dicerò? Non altro se non che tu Dio se' fatto uomo e l'uomo è fatto Dio" (*Oratio XXI*, 242).

teaching of deification has a long history.³⁷⁸ While the theme is not as well developed in the West, two theologians who employ this theme and might have influenced Catherine, are Augustine and Thomas. In the account of his conversion, Augustine recalls God's words to him which have Eucharistic overtones: "I am the food of those who are grown; grow and you will eat Me. You will not change Me into yourself, as the food of your flesh; but you will be changed into Me."³⁷⁹ Augustine considers the Incarnation to be a decisive moment of change for humanity: "God became man that man might become God."³⁸⁰ In giving reasons for the fittingness of the Incarnation, Thomas recalls Augustine's expression and notes that the purpose of the Incarnation was "the full sharing in divinity, which is true happiness and the purpose of human life. This comes to us through the humanity of Christ."³⁸¹

As a result of Jesus' redemptive actions, individuals have the possibility of cooperating with God in the process of their salvation. The realization of Jesus' love, demonstrated in the Passion, motivates this cooperation which is deepened through continuous prayer and self-knowledge. The healing power coming from Christ's death enables believers to resist the power of sin. By free choice, they respond to grace and are empowered to perform works of virtue, especially at times of temptation when, strengthened by Christ, their virtue grows. A gradual transformation into the likeness of Christ comes about, which is more than moral improvement and, indeed, is a sharing in God's life.

Catherine's use of the image of the "wedding garment" encompasses the different aspects of the process, including the gift of grace, the need to respond to the grace, and the transformation that results in this process. She recalls the parable in Matthew 22:1-14, as she urges a nun to be clothed with the "garment of charity,"

³⁷⁸ One of the earliest references to the deification is an expression of St. Athanasius which later authors, including Catherine, would adopt: "He was made man that we might be made God." St. Athanasius, *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*; PG XXV, 54, 191. Other Eastern authors such as Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, and Gregory Palamas also developed this concept. Jaroslav Pelikan comments: "The definition of the salvation of man as his deification was a standard element of Eastern theology." Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, vol. 2 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 46.

³⁷⁹ "Cibus sum grandium; cresce et manducabis me. Nec in me in te mutabis, sicut cibum carnis tuae; sed tu mutaberis in me." S. Augustinus, *Confessiones*, VII; PL 32, 742.

³⁸⁰ "Factus est Deus homo, ut homo fieret Deus." S. Augustinus, "Sermo CXXXVIII"; PL 39, 1997.

³⁸¹ "Plenum participationem divinitatis, quae vere est homini beatitudo, et finis humanae vitae. Et hoc collatum est nobis per Christi humanitatem." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 1, 2, vol. 48, trans. R. J. Hennessey, O.P. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1976), 12-13.

lest she be cast from the wedding feast.³⁸² Catherine points out that the color of this wedding garment is bright red,³⁸³ because the believer is "clothed in the nuptial garment of the fire of charity, fire mixed and kneaded together with blood, which for love was spilled and united with the Godhead."³⁸⁴

There seem to be two aspects to Catherine's understanding of the wedding garment, one of which is God's doing and the other is the human response. The initial garment is the garment of grace, given in baptism through the power of the blood.³⁸⁵ This first and principal "garment of grace" enables children who die in infancy to enter into eternal life. Yet as those baptized come to maturity they need to respond to the grace given to them. Catherine explains that "brides," those who reach maturity, must "put on the garment of love for the eternal Bridegroom" or the initial grace would be unclothed.³⁸⁶ This response to grace is an ongoing process. Catherine compares the servants who invite the guests in the parable to the inspirations God sends, which must be responded to with love and virtue.³⁸⁷

³⁸² "[C]osi voglio che facci tu, che tu abi in te el vestimento della carità, senza el quale vestimento non potresti andare alle nozze, ma sarebe detta a te quella parola che disse Cristo, di quello servo ch'era andato senza el vestimento nutiale, che comandò a' servi suoi che fusse cacciato e mandato di fuori nella tenebre. Non voglio che questo avvenga a te, diletissima figliuola mia, acciò che, se tu fussi richiesta ad andare alle nozze, non voglio che tu sia trovata senza questo dolce vestimento" (Letter 54, I, 207).

³⁸³ "Sai, diletissima mia figliuola, che la sposa, quando va dinanzi allo sposo, s'adorna e si veste; e singularmente s'adorna e pone el colore vermiglio, per piacere allo sposo suo" (Letter 54, I, 207).

³⁸⁴ "Vestito del vestimento nuziale del fuoco della carità, intriso e impastato sangue e fuoco, il quale per amore fu sparto e unito con la Deità" (Letter 102, II, 128).

³⁸⁵ "Vi diei il vestimento per mezzo di questo dolce e amoroso Verbo unigenito mio Figliuolo. Il quale, spogliando sè della vita, rivesti voi di innocenzia e di grazia; la quale innocenzia e grazia ricevete nel santo battesimo in virtù del sangue" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXV, 432-433).

³⁸⁶ "Dico che ricopre la nudità; cioè che l'anima creata all'immagine e similitudine di Dio, avendo l'essere, senza la divina Gratia non averebbe el fine per lo quale fu creata. Convienci adunque principalmente avere el vestimento della Gratia, el quale riceviamo nel santo battesimo mediante el sangue di Cristo. Con questo vestimento i fanciulli che muoiono in pueritia, àno vita eterna: ma noi sposi, che abbiamo spatio di tempo, se non ci è posto uno vestimento d'amore inverso lo Sposo Eterno, cognoscendo la sua inestimabile carità, potremmo dire che questa Gratia che noi abbiamo ricevuta nel Battesimo, fusse nuda. E però è di bisogno che noi leviamo l'affetto e el desiderio nostro con vero cognoscimento di noi ad aprire l'occhio dell'intelletto, e in noi cognoscere la bontà di Dio, e l'amore ineffabile ch'egli ci à" (Letter 220, III, 271).

³⁸⁷ "Tu se' chiamato e invitato da Cristo alle nozze di vita eterna: ma non vi dee andare chi non è vestito. Vuolsi adunque esser vestito del vestimento nuziale, acciò che non sia cacciato dalle nozze, come servo iniquo. Parmi che la prima dolce Verità t'abbia mandati i messi ad annunziare le nozze, e a recarti il vestimento: e questi messi sono le sante e buone ispirazioni e dolci desiderii che ti sono dati dalla clemenzia dello Spirito Santo. Queste sono quelle sante cogitazioni che ti fanno fuggire il vizio e spregiare il mondo con tutte le delizie sue, e fannoti giugnere alle nozze delle vere e reali virtù. Vestesi l'anima d'amore, col quale amore entra alla vita durabile. Sicchè vedi che le spirazioni sante di Dio ti

Selfish self-love deprives one of the wedding garment³⁸⁸ because the garment implies openness to Christ's grace.³⁸⁹ In the cell of self-knowledge believers increasingly hate their selfish love and find themselves "clothed in the nuptial clothing of divine charity."³⁹⁰ If the garment is lost it may be recovered through the sacrament of penance.³⁹¹

Those who are clothed with the wedding garment have strength to labor and bear difficulties.³⁹² Patience in difficulties "shows whether the garment of this charity is a wedding garment or not."³⁹³ Believers enter the wedding feast "through the door of Christ crucified," accepting suffering, as Jesus the "Bridegroom" did, to be vested with "the royal garment, of the abyss of the charity of the eternal King."³⁹⁴

recano il vestimento della virtù, fannotelo amare (e però ti vesti); ed invitati alle nozze di vita eterna. Perocchè dopo il vestimento della virtù e della ardentissima carità sèguita la Grazia, e dopo la Grazia la visione di Dio, dove sta la nostra beatitudine" (Letter 72, II, 3-4).

³⁸⁸ "Senza il quale vestimento non possiamo entrare a nozze della vita durabile, alle quali siamo invitati; ma saremo scacciati, e sbanditi di vita eterna con grandissima vergogna.... Questo gli avviene, perch' ella va al convito senza vestimento nuziale. Chi ne l'ha privato? L'amore proprio di sè medesimo. Perocchè colui ch'ama sè di proprio amore sensitivo, non può amare Dio nè sè d'amore ragionevole; perchè l'uno amore è contrario all'altro, in tanto che neuna conformità hanno insieme" (Letter 96, II, 104-105).

³⁸⁹ "Vestitevi vestitevi di Cristo crocifisso, chè egli è quello vestimento nutiale che vi darà qui la gratia, e poi vi porrà alla mensa della vita durabile, a mangiare co' veri gustatori" (Letter 99, II, 118).

³⁹⁰ "Il rimedio è questo: che noi stiamo nella cella del cognoscimento di noi; cognoscendo, noi per noi non essere, e la bontà di Dio in noi; ricognoscendo l'essere, e ogni grazia che è posta sopra l'essere da lui. E vedere li difetti nostri, acciocchè veniamo ad odio e dispiacimento della sensualità. E con l'odio fuggiremo questo amore proprio, troverenci vestiti del vestimento nuziale della divina carità, del quale l'anima debba esser vestita per andare alle nozze di vita eterna" (Letter 2, I, 8).

³⁹¹ "Credi col vestimento stracciato e brutto andare alle nozze?... Escie del peccato mortale con la santa confessione e contrizione di cuore e satisfazione, e proponimento di non offendere più. Gittarai allora a terra il brutto e laido vestimento, corrirai col vestimento nuziale, col lume e con la chiave de l'obediencia in mano, a diserrare la porta" (*Il Dialogo*, CLV, 527-528).

³⁹² "E non di meno, come vestiti del vestimento nutiale del maestro, e' si danno a ogni fatica e obrobrio e morte, per l'onore di Dio e salute del prossimo, e così l'uno separato dall'altro, e così spregiando le consolazioni e abbracciando le pene" (Letter 30, I, 114).

³⁹³ "Ella vince e non è mai vinta; ella non è sola, ma è accompagnata con la perseveranzia; ella è il mirollo della carità; ella è colei che manifesta il vestimento d'essa carità se egli è vestimento nuziale o no: se egli è rotto d'imperfezione ella il manifesta, sentendo subito il contrario cioè la impazienza" (*Il Dialogo*, XCV, 259).

³⁹⁴ "Per la porta di Cristo crocifisso entra alle nozze del Padre eterno.... Or non più! porta, porta, e fa' spalle di portatore, e non rifiutare peso, se vuoi ben guadagnare insino all'ultimo. Perocchè troppo sarebbe sconvenevole, che la sposa andasse per altra via che lo sposo suo. Altro modo non c'è a voler portare, se non essere vestita, come è detto. E però vi dissi io che desideravo di vedervi vestita del vestimento reale, cioè, dell'abisso della carità del Re eterno" (Letter 182, III, 107-108). Suor Bartolomea della Seta was a nun of the Monastery of Santo Stefano near Pisa. Noffke places this letter between September and October 1377.

They must be clothed in Christ's love, remaining in the love of their neighbors to enter eternal life.³⁹⁵ Those who are "clothed with the wedding garment" pursue the salvation of their neighbors' souls in imitation of the good pastor who ran to His shameful death for love.³⁹⁶ Those who are "clothed with the nuptial garment of charity, adorned with many true virtues" become other *christs* because they are "clothed and united and conformed" with His will.³⁹⁷

Responsibility for Those Being Saved to Cooperate in the Salvation of Others

Professor Antonio Volpato, who, since 1980, has continued Dupré Theseider's project of establishing the critical edition of Catherine's letters, has drawn attention to the emphasis Catherine places on the honor of God and the salvation of souls. The expression "l'onore di Dio e la salute delle anime" appears frequently in Catherine's writings, especially in her letters.³⁹⁸ For Catherine, the honor of God and the salvation of souls are intimately related. Seeking God's honor entails the salvation of souls, as the Father declares in *Il Dialogo*: "It is necessary for all of you to keep to this bridge [Christ], seeking the glory and praise of My name in the salvation of souls, bearing with pain and with many fatigues, following the footsteps of the gentle and loving Word. By any other way you would not be able to come to Me."³⁹⁹ Following the footsteps of the Word necessitates seeking the Father's glory in the salvation of souls. The Father chooses to save the people of the world through the cooperation of those who follow in the steps of Jesus, as He states: "You are My

³⁹⁵ "Vestitelo dell'amore di Cristo crocifisso con perfetta e ardentissima carità, stando sempre in dilezione e in amore col prossimo vostro...questo è il vestimento nuziale, il quale ci conviene avere perchè siamo invitati alle nozze della vita durabile" (Letter 155, III, 15).

³⁹⁶ "E non si ritrae di procacciare la salute dell'anima e del corpo per ingratitude che truovi in loro, nè per minacce nè per lusinghe d'uomo; ma in verità, vestito del vestimento nuziale, sèguita la dottrina dell'umile e immacolato Agnello, pastore dolce e buono; il quale, come innamorato, per la salute nostra corse all'obbrobriosa morte della santissima croce" (Letter 291, IV, 224).

³⁹⁷ "E tra la bellezza che Io ò data all'anima creandola alla imagine e similitudine mia, riguarda costoro che son vestiti del vestimento nuziale della carità, adornato di molte vere virtù: uniti sono con meco per amore. E però ti dico che se tu dimandassi me chi son costoro, risponderei - diceva el dolce e amoroso Verbo - sono un altro me; perchè anno perduta e annegata la volontà loro propria, e vestitisi e unitisi e conformatisi con la mia" (*Il Dialogo*, I, 2-3).

³⁹⁸ The frequency of this expression in Catherine's letters can be shown, for example, by its appearance in five of the first twelve letters in the Tommasèo collection. See Letter 2, I, 6; Letter 6, I, 23; Letter 8, I, 29; Letter 11, I, 36; Letter 12, I, 38.

³⁹⁹ "Tutti vi conviene tenere per questo ponte, cercando la gloria e loda del nome mio nella salute dell'anime, con pena sostenendo le molte fadighe, seguitando le vestigie di questo dolce e amoroso Verbo: in altro modo non potreste venire a me" (*Il Dialogo*, XXIII, 63).

workers, whom I have set to work there in the vineyard of the holy Church because I wish to be merciful to the world."⁴⁰⁰

Volpato observes that Catherine's emphasis on ministry sets her off from many of her contemporaries:

The link set by St. Catherine between the theme of the honor of God and conformity to Christ constitutes an element of profound originality in the writings of the saint. The conformity to Christ was otherwise seen in the best known spiritual currents of her day in poverty and in humility, and the mystic union with God was explained in an attitude full of reserve and almost mistrust towards the apostolate, as for example in the *Tractatus utilissimus* attributed to Jacopone da Todi. There the search for peace of soul leads one to consider in everything that happens the honor of God and His will, but the prelacy or the care of preaching, or intending other useful service for neighbors are only seen as potential dangers.⁴⁰¹

For Catherine, the spiritual life necessarily gives rise to concern for the salvation of one's neighbor. An illustration of Catherine's insistence that the care for souls is intimately joined to the love of God can be seen in her advice to the Augustinian, William Flete. Catherine admonishes the spiritual master not to forego saying Mass in his convent in favor of his solitary prayer in the woods:

Because you lose the consolations, you do not lose therefore the state of grace. Rather, you acquire it when you lose your will. I wish therefore that we will show ourselves to be eaters of souls and tasters of our neighbors. Let us not attend only to our consolations but we ought to attend to hear and have compassion for the fatigues of our neighbors, and especially those who are united in one same charity. And if you do not do so, it would be the greatest defect.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰⁰ "Voi sete miei lavoratori, che v'ho messi a lavorare nella vigna della santa Chiesa: perocchè io voglio fare misericordia al mondo" (Letter 272, IV, 162). Noffke considers this letter to have been written on October 10, 1377, or shortly afterward.

⁴⁰¹ "Il legame posto da s. Caterina fra il tema dell'onore di Dio e la conformità a Cristo costituisce un elemento di profonda originalità degli scritti della santa. La conformità a Cristo era piuttosto vista, nelle correnti spirituali più diffuse, nella povertà e nell'umiltà e il legame mistico con Dio si traduceva in un atteggiamento pieno di riserbo e quasi di diffidenza verso l'apostolato, come - per esempio - nel *Tractatus utilissimus* attribuito a Jacopone da Todi. Qui la ricerca della pace dell'anima induce a considerare in tutto ciò che avviene 'honorem Dei et voluntatem eius', ma solo come un potenziale pericolo sono visti prelato vel sollicitudo predicandi, seu intendendi alteri utilitati proximorum." Antonio Volpato, "L'onore di Dio e la salute delle anime in S. Caterina," in *Atti del Simposio Internazionale Cateriniano-Bernardiniano: Siena, 17-20 aprile 1980*, ed. Domenico Maffei, Paola Nardi (Siena: Accademia Senese degli Intronati, 1982), 304.

⁴⁰² "Perchè voi perdiate le consolazioni, non perdetè però lo stato della gratia, anco, l'acquistate, quando voi perdetè la vostra volontà. Voglio che, acciò che noi mostriamo d'essere mangiatori dell'anime e gustatori de' prossimi, noi non attendiamo pure alle nostre consolazioni, ma doviamo attendere a udire e avere compassione alle fatiche de' prossimi, e specialmente a coloro che sono uniti a una medesima carità. E se non faceste così, sarebbe grandissimo difetto" (Letter 77, II, 26). Noffke dates this letter between late March and very early April 1376.

Catherine's emphasis on the necessity of laboring for souls is grounded in her understanding of the relationship between loving God and loving one's neighbor. The person who contemplates the generosity of God desires to return love to God but realizes that God has no need of his or her gifts. Loving one's neighbor is the only way to give love back to God. The Father tells Catherine: "And so I have set your neighbor as the means that you may do for him what you are not able to do for Me, that is, to love him without any regard for thanks and without expecting some return. And I consider that you do to Me what you do to him."⁴⁰³

Realizing that one is loved by God, one loves others for God.⁴⁰⁴ Service to one's neighbors demonstrates one's love for God: "And seeing that he is not able to do service to God, he does service to his neighbor, loving him and serving him in that which he is able. And so he shows the perfect love which he has for his Creator because with any other means he cannot show the love and the virtue which is within the soul, except with the neighbor because every virtue is proved with this means."⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰³ "E però v'ò posto il mezzo del prossimo vostro, acciò che faciate a lui quello che non potete fare a me, cioè d'amarlo senza alcuno rispetto di grazia e senza aspettare alcuna utilità. E io reputo che faciate a me quello che fate a lui" (*Il Dialogo*, LXIV, 164).

⁴⁰⁴ "For we do not see it because the cloud of selfish love has clouded the eye of the understanding, where the pupil of the light of most holy faith is found. With this light we come to a most perfect love of God. And with this we come to the love of our neighbor. Since the soul that loves its Creator, wishes to love what He loves greatly, and seeing that He loves the creature greatly, it is compelled by the fire of His charity to love them and serve them with great diligence and solicitude. And that benefit which he is unable to do for God, because He does not need us, He wants to do for them, ministering to them with those graces and gifts, spiritual and temporal, which he has received in himself from God. And when he ministers to them he does it with a spiritual intention because genuine and generous charity does not seek its own, because he does not love himself or the Creator or the creatures for himself, but he loves each thing for God." "E perchè non ci vediamo: perchè la nuvola del proprio amore ha offuscato l'occhio dell'intelletto, dove sta la pupilla del lume della santissima Fede. Con questo lume veniamo a perfettissima carità di Dio. E con questo veniamo alla carità del prossimo nostro. Però che l'anima che ama il suo Creatore, vuole amare quello che egli molto ama: e però vedendo che egli molto ama la creatura, è costretta dal fuoco della sua carità ad amarla e servirla con grande diligenza e sollecitudine. E quella utilità che non può fare a Dio, perchè non ha bisogno di noi, la vuol fare a lei, ministrandole di quelle grazie e doni, che ha ricevuti da Dio in sè spirituali e temporali. E ciò che le ministra fa con spirituale intenzione; però che la carità schietta e liberale non cerca le cose sue, perchè non ama sè, nè il Creatore, nè le creature per sè, ma ogni cosa ama per Dio" (Letter 279, IV, 189-190). Noffke believes that this letter was written between September 15 and October 15, 1378.

⁴⁰⁵ "E vedendo che utilità a Dio non può fare, fa utilità al suo prossimo, amandolo e servendolo in ciò ch'egli può: e così dimostra l'amore perfetto che egli ha al suo Creatore, però che con altro mezzo non può mostrare l'amore e la virtù che è dentro nell'anima, se non col prossimo; perocchè ogni virtù si pruova con questo mezzo" (Letter 366, V, 258-259). Noffke dates this letter between October 1-15, 1379. Catherine wrote this letter to the artist, Andrea Vanni. In 1385, Vanni painted a fresco of

Catherine maintains that virtue is always situated in the relationship to one's neighbor: "For I want you to know that every virtue and every defect is brought about through the neighbor."⁴⁰⁶ The virtues that are conceived in the love of God are brought to birth in the love of neighbor.⁴⁰⁷ The virtues come to life in the service of one's neighbor: "That is the means by which you ought to give service, just as I told you that every virtue is done by means of your neighbor, given to you to

Catherine in San Domenico in Siena. In this oldest and perhaps best-known painting, Catherine holds a lily and extends her fingers to receive the kiss of a kneeling woman. See George Kaftal, *St. Catherine in Tuscan Painting* (Oxford: Blackfriars, 1949), 20-21.

⁴⁰⁶ "Chè Io ti fo sapere che ogni virtù si fa col mezzo del prossimo, e ogni difetto" (*Il Dialogo*, VI, 16).

⁴⁰⁷ Catherine teaches a fellow *Mantellata*, Caterina di Scetto, that all the virtues come to birth through one's neighbor: "Know that each virtue receives life from love and love is acquired in love, that is lifting the eye of our intellect, and seeing how much we are loved by God. Seeing ourselves loved, we are not able not to love, loving him, we will embrace the virtues through the affection of love, and with hate we despise vice. So you see that in God we conceive virtues, and in the neighbor they are brought to birth. Know well that in the need of your neighbor, you bring to birth the child, charity, which is within the soul, and in the injury that you receive from him, patience. You give him prayers, particularly for those who did you injury. And so we ought to do, if they are unfaithful to us, we ought to be faithful to them, and faithfully seek their salvation, loving them by grace and not for obligation. That is, you watch yourself not to love your neighbor for usefulness, because it would not be a faithful love, and you would not respond to the love that God bears for you. Because as God has loved you by grace so He wishes that you, not being able to render him this love, may render it to your neighbor, loving him by grace and not debt as I have said. Neither through injury nor because you saw the love towards you or the delight or the profit lessened, you ought not to lessen nor reduce the love towards your neighbor, but love him charitably, carrying and bearing his sins; care for the servants of God with great consolation and reverence." "Sappi che ogni virtù riceve vita dall'amore; e l'amore s'acquista nell'amore, cioè levando l'occhio dell'intelletto nostro, e rguardare quanto siamo amati da Dio. Vedendoci amare, non potiamo fare che noi non amiamo; amandolo, abbracciamo le virtù per affetto d'amore, e coll'odio spregiamo il vizio. Sicchè vedi che in Dio concipiamo le virtù, e nel prossimo si partoriscono. Sai bene che nella necessità del prossimo tuo, tu partorisci il figliuolo della carità, che è dentro nell'anima; e nella ingiuria che tu ricevi da lui, la pazienza. Tu gli doni l'orazione, singolarmente a coloro che ti fanno ingiuria. E così dobbiamo fare: se essi sono a noi infedeli, e noi dobbiamo essere a loro fedeli, e fedelmente cercare la loro salute; amarli di grazia, e non di debito. Cioè, che tu ti guardi da non amare il prossimo tuo per propria utilità; perchè non sarebbe amore fedele, e non risponderesti all'amore che Dio ti porta. Chè come Dio t'ha amata di grazia così vuole che, non potendogli tu rendere questo amore, tu il renda al prossimo tuo, amandolo di grazia, e non di debito, come detto è. Nè per ingiuria, nè perchè tu vedessi diminuire l'amore verso di te o il diletto o la propria utilità, non debbi tu diminuire nè scemare l'amore verso del tuo prossimo: ma amarlo caritativamente, portando e sopportando i difetti suoi; con grande consolazione e riverenza rguardare i servi di Dio" (Letter 50, I, 193-194). Noffke places this letter between October 15 and November 30, 1377.

minister to every person in general and in particular, according to the different graces received from Me."⁴⁰⁸

Catherine tells the Cardinal of Ostia, "This is the time, my dearest Father, to give honor to God and effort to our neighbor."⁴⁰⁹ Since God does not need our service, we show our affection for Him and give Him honor by our efforts for our neighbors.⁴¹⁰ In *Il Dialogo*, the Father asserts: "The love of Me and of your neighbor is one and the same thing, and as much as the soul loves Me, so she loves him because the love towards him flows from Me."⁴¹¹

Our neighbors' bodily needs should be seen with the "pupil of faith."⁴¹² Catherine assures us: "The more you will love God, the more you will extend your love to your neighbor."⁴¹³ We are bound to care for our neighbors' needs, whether spiritual or material: "You are held to love your neighbor as yourself, loving him, you ought to help him spiritually with prayer, and counseling him with the word, and aiding him spiritually and temporally, according to what he needs in his necessity, if only willingly when you are without other means."⁴¹⁴ This desire to return love to God

⁴⁰⁸ "È quel mezzo a cui dovete fare utilità. Si come Io ti dissi che ogni virtù si faceva col mezzo del prossimo - ad ogni creatura in comune e in particolare, secondo le diverse grazie ricevute da me, dandovele a ministrare" (*Il Dialogo*, LXXXIX, 237).

⁴⁰⁹ "Parmi che sia tempo, carissimo padre, di dare l'onore a Dio e la fadiga al prossimo" (Letter 11, I, 36). A similar passage may be found in Letter 181: "Ora, mentre che aviamo el tempo, e 'l tempo è nostro, diamo la fadiga al prossimo nostro e la loda a Dio" (Letter 181, III, 106).

⁴¹⁰ "E questo affetto non potiamo mostrare in lui per utilità che noi gli potiamo fare, chè egli non à bisogno di nostro bene, ma potiamo e doviamo dimostrarlo ne' fratelli nostri, cercando la gloria e loda del nome di Dio in loro. Adunque non più negligentia nè dormire nell'ignorantia, ma con acceso e ardito cuore distendete e' dolci e amorosi desiderii, ad andare a dare l'onore a Dio e la fadiga al prossimo, non partendovi mai dall'obietto vostro Cristo crucifisso" (Letter 226, III, 298).

⁴¹¹ "Ma come in verità m'ama, così fa utilità al prossimo suo; e non può essere altrimenti, perché l'amore di me e del prossimo è una medesima cosa, e tanto quanto l'anima ama me, tanto ama lui, perché l'amore verso di lui esce di me" (*Il Dialogo*, VII, 21-22).

⁴¹² "Il quale affetto trae a sè il cielo e la terra, cioè il vasello del corpo del prossimo suo; il quale si debbe ponere nella pupilla della fede: e nell'affetto suo essere fedele per onore di Dio, in cercare la salute dell'anime, e sovvenire al corpo nella sua necessità, quanto gli è possibile" (Letter 343, V, 142-143).

⁴¹³ "E quanto più amarete Dio, tanto più si distenderà l'amore vostro al prossimo vostro, sovvenendolo spiritualmente e temporalmente, secondo che vengono i casi, e il tempo che bisogna di servire al prossimo suo" (Letter 180, III, 101).

⁴¹⁴ "[S]ete tenuti d'amare il prossimo come voi medesimi; amandolo el dovete sovvenire spiritualmente con l'orazione, e consigliandolo con la parola, e aiutandolo spiritualmente e temporalmente, secondo che fa bisogno alla sua necessità, almeno volontariamente, non avendo altro" (*Il Dialogo*, VI, 17).

moves us to service: "The soul fallen in love with My truth never rests but serves all the world, in common and in particular, small and great."⁴¹⁵

Catherine recounts an experience when a "servant of God," undoubtedly herself, asked God what she should do and God replied: "Give honor to me and your effort to your neighbor." When she inquired what type of effort she should give her neighbor, she was told: "Give them your bodily and mental efforts." The mental efforts are marked by desire, with humble and continuous prayer for her neighbors, and a hunger for their salvation and patience in the difficulties that arose. Through bodily effort, Catherine says, "we tire ourselves bodily in the service of our neighbors, serving them with whatever service it may be."⁴¹⁶ This service is given freely and magnanimously, doing whatever we are able to do according to our ability.⁴¹⁷ Through such service for our neighbor we use the gifts and graces we have received from God, loving each one for God.⁴¹⁸ We must be willing to suffer every suffering to save even one soul, and to sacrifice our own material needs for our neighbors.⁴¹⁹

This care is particularly for those who are visibly present to us. We are especially called to help those we know by teaching, by the example of good deeds, and

⁴¹⁵ "Non si ristà mai, l'anima innamorata della mia verità, di fare utilità a tutto il mondo, in comune e in particolare, poco e assai" (*Il Dialogo*, VII, 22).

⁴¹⁶ "E però fu detto a quella serva di Dio, dicendo ella: 'Signore mio, che vuoi tu che io faccia?', ed egli rispose: 'Dà l'onore a me, e la fatica al prossimo tuo.' E che fatica gli dò? Dàgli fatica corporale e mentale. Fatica mentale e di santo desiderio, e offerire sante e umili e continue orazioni, con allegrezza de' virtuosi, e con dolore di quelli che giaciono nella morte de' peccati mortali, sostenendo con vera pazienza gli scandali, le infamie e le mormorazioni loro, e le quali danno a noi; non ritardando per alcuna cosa l'orazione, e l'affocato desiderio, fame e sollicitudine della salute loro. Allora si conforma l'anima con Cristo crocifisso, mangiando questo cibo in su la penosa e ansietata croce del desiderio di Cristo, che fu maggiore e più penosa che quella del corpo. Dico che vuole gli sia data ancora fatica corporale; e questo è quando ci affatichiamo corporalmente in servizio del prossimo, servendolo di qualunque servizio si sia, patendone noi disagi e pene corporali" (Letter 104, II, 136).

⁴¹⁷ "E anco li distende, quando può, sovvenendolo della sustanzia temporale con largo e liberale cuore, schietto e non finto cioè che mostri una cosa in atto, e non sia in fatto; ma schiettamente e con affettuosa carità il serve di qualunque servizio egli può, e che vede egli abbia bisogno giusta il suo potere" (Letter 113, II, 172).

⁴¹⁸ "E quella utilità che non può fare a Dio, perchè non ha bisogno di noi, la vuol fare a lei, ministrandole di quelle grazie e doni, che ha ricevuti da Dio in sè spirituali e temporali. E ciò che le ministra fa con spirituale intenzione; però che la carità schietta e liberale non cerca le cose sue, perchè non ama sè, nè il Creatore, nè le creature per sè, ma ogni cosa ama per Dio" (Letter 279, IV, 189-190).

⁴¹⁹ "Ella ordina questa carità nel prossimo: che per lui non vuole ponere l'anima sua; cioè, per farli utilità o piacere non vuole offendere Dio; ma discretamente fugge la colpa, e dispone il corpo suo ad ogni pena e tormento, e alla morte, per campare un'anima, e quante ne potesse campare, dalle mani del dimonio. E disponi a ponere la sustanzia temporale per sovvenire e campare il corpo del prossimo suo" (Letter 213, III, 230-231).

by responding to whatever their needs may be.⁴²⁰ This service to the neighbor may be as specific as "visiting the sick, helping the poor, consoling the troubled, mourning with those who mourn [those in serious sin]."⁴²¹ Ministering to the poor is particularly helpful to our own salvation⁴²² and the Blood teaches us to consider the poor to be our masters.⁴²³

In serving our neighbors, we bear with patience any aggravation which may come.⁴²⁴ We should have the same attitude as Jesus who did not pull away from suffering for us because of our ingratitude. Thus Catherine teaches, "we should not pull back from helping our neighbors in their spiritual or bodily needs without concern for receiving any service or consolation in this life, only loving him and helping him because God loves him."⁴²⁵

Service to one's neighbor should imitate the characteristics of God's love. God takes the initiative in love by loving His creatures with a totally gratuitous love that does not cease even when there is no response. To respond to God's love one must love his or her neighbors with similar gratuity, as the Father explains:

You ought to love with that pure love with which I love you. You cannot do this to Me because I loved you without being loved and without any self concern. For I have loved you without being loved by you before you were. Indeed, love moved Me to create you in My image and likeness. You are not able to give that back to Me but you ought to give it to other people, loving them without being loved by

⁴²⁰ "Utilità particolari sono quelle che si fanno a coloro che vi sono più da presso dinnanzi agli occhi vostri, de' quali sete tenuti di sovenire l'uno all'altro, con la parola e dottrina ed esempio di buone operazioni, e di tutte l'altre cose che si vede egli abbi bisogno, consigliandolo schiettamente come sè medesimo e senza passione di proprio suo amore" (*Il Dialogo*, VI, 18).

⁴²¹ "Poichè l'anima arà acquistata la purità per lo modo detto, vedendo che a Dio non può fare utilità neuna, distenderà l'amore al prossimo suo, facendo a lui quella utilità ch'egli non può fare a Dio; visitando gl'infermi, sovvenendo e' poverelli, consolando e' tribolati; piangendo con coloro che piangono, e godendo con coloro che godono: cioè con coloro che sono nel pianto del peccato mortale, avendo loro compassione, offrendo per loro continue orazioni nel cospetto di Dio; e godendo con coloro che godono, che sono veri servi di Cristo crocifisso; e sempre diletarvi della loro conversazione" (Letter 40, I, 167).

⁴²² "Pensate, che l'atto della pietà, e il ministrare a' poverelli di quella virtù che Dio v'ha data a voi, molto è piacevole a Dio, e salute dell'anima" (Letter 258, IV, 97).

⁴²³ "Il sangue c'insegna a ministrare la sustanzia temporale: siccome ha fatto e fa continuamente in voi, facendovi de' poveri e di coloro che hanno necessità, signori" (Letter 355, V, 215).

⁴²⁴ "E questo sarà il segno che voi abbiate trovato e concepito amore, quando vi legherete col legame della carità nel prossimo vostro, amandolo e servendolo caritativamente perocchè quello bene e quella utilità, che noi non potiamo fare a Dio, il dobbiamo fare al prossimo nostro, portando con vera pazienza ogni fatica che noi ricevessimo da lui" (Letter 53, I, 206).

⁴²⁵ "E siccome egli non si trasse nè per pena, nè per rimproverio, nè per ingratitude nostra, che non compisse la nostra salute, così dobbiamo fare noi, che per veruna cagione ci dobbiamo ritrarre di sovenire alla necessità del prossimo nostro, spirituale e corporale, senza rispetto d'alcuna utilità o consolazione riceverne quaggiù; solo amarlo e sovvenirlo, perchè Dio l'ama" (Letter 78, II, 28).

them and to love without any concern for your own spiritual or material benefit, but only to love for the glory and praise of My name because they are loved by Me.⁴²⁶

So related is the love of neighbor to the love of God, that Catherine insists that in heaven those who have found salvation delight forever not only in God but also in each other. She describes the mutual delight of these holy ones:

For they remain in My charity and in that of their neighbor and are united together with a general charity and with a special charity both of which come from the one same charity. They rejoice and exult, sharing the goodness, the one with the other with the affection of charity, beyond the universal goodness which they all have together. And with the angels they rejoice and exult. With the saints they are placed according to the various and different virtues which they principally had in the world. All being bound with the bond of charity, they have a singular sharing with those whom they loved most closely with a special love in the world, with which love they grew in grace and in virtue. The one was the reason for the other to show the glory and praise of My name in themselves and in their neighbor.⁴²⁷

The mutual love which is the culmination of salvation also distinguishes believers as they move towards salvation. God's providence has designed His human creatures to be dependent on the support of others. In *Il Dialogo*, the Father points out that each individual is given unique and special virtues but he or she remains lacking in other virtues. The Father explains why this is so: "Everything is not set in one person, in order that you have need, necessarily, to exercise charity, the one with the other. For I was well able to make people, giving them what they needed for the soul and for the body. But I wanted the one to have need of the other, and that they might be My ministers to minister the graces and gifts they had received from Me."⁴²⁸

⁴²⁶ "Amare dovete di quel puro amore che Io amo voi: questo non si può fare verso di me, perchè Io v'amai senza essere amato e senza veruno rispetto. E però che Io v'ò amati senza essere amato da voi prima che voi foste - anco l'amore mi mosse a crearvi alla imagine e similitudine mia - no'l potete rendere a me, ma dovetelo rendere alla creatura che à in sè ragione, amandoli senza essere amati da loro; e amare senza alcuno rispetto di propria utilità spirituale o temporale, ma solo amare a gloria e loda del nome mio, perchè è amata da me" (*Il Dialogo*, LXXXIX, 237-238).

⁴²⁷ "Perchè sono stati nella carità mia e in quella del prossimo, ed uniti insieme colla carità comune e con la particolare, che esce pure da una medesima carità, godono ed esultano partecipando il bene l'uno dell'altro con l'affetto della carità, oltre al bene universale che essi àno tutti insieme. E con la natura angelica godono ed esultano, co' quali i santi sono collocati, secondo le diverse e varie virtù le quali principalmente ebbero nel mondo. Essendo legati tutti nel legame della carità, àno una singulare partecipazione con coloro con cui strettamente d'amore singulare s'amarono nel mondo, col quale amore crescevano in grazia augmentando la virtù. L'uno era cagione all'altro di manifestare la gloria e lode del nome mio in loro e nel prossimo" (*Il Dialogo*, XLI, 101-102).

⁴²⁸ "Non l'ò poste tutte in uno, acciò che abbiate materia, per forza, d'usare la carità l'uno con l'altro; che bene potevo fare gli uomini dotati di ciò che bisognava, e per l'anima e per lo corpo; ma Io

The greatest service that one person can do for another is to help her or him come closer to God. Such efforts reflect Jesus' desire for souls:

The blood showed ineffable love, because through love He gave the blood, and with His love He asks us for drink. That is, the one who loves asks to be loved and served. This is a necessary thing, that one who loves should be loved. Then the soul gives drink to his Creator, when he renders love for love.... And above all the many other services which please our Savior is to take souls from the hands of the devil, taking them from the state of the world, from the mouth of vanity of the world and bringing them back to the holy state of religion.... And this is that holy beverage which the Son of God asked for on the cross.⁴²⁹

Catherine frequently describes the labor for salvation of one's neighbors as "eating and tasting" souls. For Catherine, the effort involved in drawing another person closer to God is like chewing food, which is also savored as it is chewed. She writes:

It is always necessary that our souls be eaters and tasters of the souls of our brothers. And we ought to delight ourselves in no other food, always helping them with every solicitude, delighting ourselves to receive pains and afflictions for love of them because this was the food of our sweet Savior. Certainly I tell you, our Savior gives them to me to eat.⁴³⁰

Catherine teaches that this hunger for souls arises from constant reflection on Jesus' willingness to give Himself.⁴³¹ One who knows God's love desires to "eat

volsi che l'uno avesse bisogno dell'altro, e fossero miei ministri a ministrare le grazie e doni che àno ricevuti da me" (*Il Dialogo*, VII, 23-24).

⁴²⁹ "Il sangue ci manifesta l'amore ineffabile; chè per amore ha donato il sangue, e con esso amore ci chiede bere. Cioè che colui che ama, richiede d'essere amato e servito. Cosa convenevole è, che colui che ama sia amato. Allora dà bere l'anima al suo creatore, quando gli rende amore per amore.... E sopra tutti quanti gli altri servizi che piacciono al nostro Salvatore, si è di trarre l'anime dalle mani del dimonio, trarle dello stato del secolo, della bocca delle vanità del mondo, e reducerle allo stato santo della religione.... E questo è quello santo beverage il quale chiede il Figliuolo di Dio su la Croce" (Letter 8, I, 28).

⁴³⁰ "[S]empre si conviene che l'anime nostre siano mangiatrici e gustatrici dell'anime de' nostri fratelli. E di nullo altro cibo ci dobbiamo mai dilettere, sempre aiutandoli con ogni sollecitudine, dilettrandoci di ricevere pene e tribulationi per amore di loro: però che questo fu il cibo del nostro dolce Salvatore. Ben vi dico che 'l nostro Salvatore me ne dà a mangiare" (Letter 147, II, 293). Catherine wrote this to Sano di Maco from Pisa. Noffke dates this letter in mid-April, late Lent, 1375.

⁴³¹ She encourages the Augustinian, Frate Jeronimo da Siena: "Act so that in the cell of your soul the tree of the most holy cross may always stay planted and raised, because at this tree...you will acquire the hunger to be eaters and tasters of souls, realizing that through the hunger of our salvation and of the honor of the Father, He has humbled Himself and given Himself to the shameful death of the cross, as one crazy, intoxicated and enamored with us." "Fate che nella cella dell'anima vostra stia sempre piantato e ritto l'arbolo della santissima croce, però che a questo arbolo...acquistarete la fame d'essere mangiatori e gustatori dell'anime, vedendo che per fame della salute nostra e dell'onore del Padre, elli s'è umiliato e dato sè medesimo all'obrobiosa morte della croce, si come pazzo ebbro e innamorato di noi" (Letter 52, I, 202-203). This letter was written between April 6 and 12, 1376.

souls."⁴³² While encouraging Frate Bartolomeo Dominici to labor for souls in his preaching mission, Catherine informs him that he will grow in strength through his efforts. She calls attention to the example of Jesus' generosity:

And I tell you, my sweetest son, that there will be no soul that considers God become human, running to the shame of the holy cross, spilling an abundance of His blood, that he does not follow, and share and fill himself with true love. And so he will delight in the food of which God Himself delights, to be an eater and taster of souls. This is a food of such sweetness and mildness that the soul grows fat, and it cannot delight itself with any other. And I tell you that your weak teeth will here be fortified, so that you will be able to eat big mouthfuls and small.⁴³³

Catherine applies this vocabulary of eating souls to her own ministry. In the late summer and fall of 1377, Catherine preached conversion and reconciliation in the countryside around Rocca d'Orcia, with the assistance of Raimondo and Tommaso dalla Fonte. In describing their experiences, she writes: "Frate Raimondo, Frate Tommaso, Monna Tomma, Lisa, and I are at Rocca among the rascals, and eat so many incarnate demons that Frate Tommaso says that his stomach aches. And with all this he is not able to be satisfied. And they crave more and they find work for a good price. Pray the divine goodness that He may give them fat, sweet, and bitter morsels."⁴³⁴

⁴³² "And they act as the eagle who always gazes at the wheel of the sun and goes on high, and when he looks on earth, taking the food of which he ought to nourish himself, he eats it on high. So does the creature, I mean, he looks on high, where is the sun of divine love, and then looks toward earth, that is towards the humanity of the Incarnate Word of the Son of God, and looking on that Word and the humanity drawn from the sweet womb of Mary, he sees the food on that table and he eats it." "E fanno come l'aquila che sempre ragguarda la rota del sole e va in alto, e poi ragguarda la terra e prendendo el cibo del quale si debba notricare, el mangia in alto. Così fa la creatura: cioè che ragguarda in alto, dove è il sole del divino amore, e ragguarda poi verso la terra, cioè verso l'umanità del verbo incarnato del Figliuolo di Dio, e ragguardando in quello verbo e umanità tratta del ventre dolce di Maria, vede in su questa mensa el cibo e mangialo" (Letter 134, II, 254). This letter was sent to Bartolomeo and Giacomo, hermits in Campo Santo in Pisa. Noffke places this letter between late January and early May 1376.

⁴³³ "E dicovi, figliuolo mio dolcissimo, che non sarà neuna anima che ragguardi Dio diventato uomo, corso all'obbrobio della santa croce, versato l'abbondantia del sangue suo, che non attenga e participi e empisi di vero amore. E così si diletterà del cibo del quale Dio si diletto, essere mangiatore e gustatore dell'anime. Questo è uno cibo di tanta dolcezza e soavità che ingrassa l'anima, e d'altro non si può dilettere. E dicovi ch'è vostri denti debili saranno qui fortificati, si che potrete mangiare e' bocconi grossi e piccoli" (Letter 200, III, 179-180). This letter was written to Frate Bartolomeo Dominici, when he was doing the Lenten preaching in Asciano. Noffke places this letter in late March 1372.

⁴³⁴ "Frate Raimondo e frate Tommaso e Monna Tomma e Lisa e io, siamo alla Rocca fra' mascalzoni; e mangiansi tanti dimoni incarnati, che frate Tommaso dice che gli duole lo stomaco. E con tutto questo non si può saziare. E più appetiscano; e trovanci lavoro per uno buono prezzo.

Catherine considers the symbolism of eating souls to be apt because the mouth with which physical food is eaten, also serves a spiritual purpose. Through the mouth, one intercedes with God for souls and proclaims God to one's neighbors. This spiritual eating must be done at the table of the cross, that is, with a consciousness of the effects of Jesus' death and in the knowledge of His love. This food is chewed over in the sense that the individual continually is aware of both his or her own inclination to selfish self love and of the necessity of virtue for him- or herself and for the neighbor:

The mouth takes what is given to the stomach, and the teeth chew it because in another way one would not be able to swallow the food. Now, so is the soul. First, she speaks to Me with the tongue that stays in the mouth of her holy desire, that is, the tongue of holy and continual prayer. This tongue speaks actually and thoughtfully: interiorly offering to Me gentle and loving desires for the salvation of souls, and actually she speaks, proclaiming the teaching of My Truth, admonishing, counseling, and confessing, without any fear of her own suffering that the world might want to give her, but ardently she confesses before every creature in different ways and to each one according to his situation. I say that she eats, taking the food of souls for My honor upon the table of the most holy cross. In another way or at another table, she would not be able to eat perfectly in truth. And I say that she chews it because in another way she would not be able to swallow it. She chews with teeth, that is, with hatred and with love, which are the two rows of teeth in the mouth of holy desire, which hold the food, chewing it with hatred of self and with love of virtue in herself and in her neighbor.⁴³⁵

Christians are called to become like Christ in His ministry of reconciling the world with God. This eating of souls entails suffering, even as Christ suffered for souls. In *Il Dialogo*, the Father explains that His servants are mediators who are united with Christ through prayer, suffering, and the example of their lives. Each one is another "Christ crucified":

Pregate la divina bontà che lor dia grossi e dolci e amari bocconi" (Letter 118, II, 188). Noffke places this letter between mid-August and early September 1377.

⁴³⁵ "La bocca ritiene porgendo allo stomaco, e i denti schiacciano, però che in altro modo non potrebbe inghiottire il cibo. Or così l'anima: prima parla a me con la lingua che sta nella bocca del santo desiderio suo, cioè la lingua della santa e continua orazione. Questa lingua parla attuale e mentale: mentale offerendo a me dolci e amorosi desideri in salute dell'anime, e attuale parla annunziando la dottrina della mia Verità, amonendo consigliando e confessando senza alcuno timore di propria pena che il mondo le volesse dare, ma arditamente confessa inanzi ad ogni creatura in diversi modi, e a ciascuno secondo lo stato suo. Dico che mangia prendendo il cibo dell'anime per onore di me in su la mensa della santissima croce, però che in altro modo nè in altra mensa no'l potrebbe mangiare in verità perfettamente, e dico che lo schiaccia, però che in altro modo no'l potrebbe inghiottire, co' denti, cioè con l'odio e con l'amore, i quali sono due filaia di denti nella bocca del santo desiderio, che ritiene il cibo schiacciando con odio di sè e con amore della virtù in sè e nel prossimo suo" (*Il Dialogo*, LXXVI, 196-197).

Truly these are able to be called another Christ crucified, My only-begotten Son, because they have undertaken to do His work. He came as a mediator, to end the war and to reconcile humanity with Me in peace, with much suffering even to the shameful death of the cross. So these are being crucified, making themselves the means with prayer and with words and with good and holy lives, setting themselves as an example before them. The precious stones of the virtues shine, as they bear and suffer sins with patience. These are the hooks with which they catch souls.⁴³⁶

Union with Christ on the cross through prayer is the principal labor of Christians on behalf of the salvation of souls.⁴³⁷ Prayer is such an important aspect of "eating souls" that Catherine considers a contemplative Dominican nun, Agnesa, to be an example of an "eater of souls," even though she had a very limited public ministry: "She had that uncreated charity, which continually burned and consumed in her heart: she was an eater and taster of souls. She always strived for the vigil of prayer."⁴³⁸

In the remembrance of the blood one realizes Jesus' hunger for souls and one desires to be united with Him in His desire. This desire precedes any other activity for souls. Through pondering Christ's hunger for souls, one begins to desire to make a total giving of self and so imitates Jesus' desire. Catherine writes: "For love of the blood may you give your blood, and your life for love of the life. Now is the time to die, craving for the honor of God and for the salvation of souls, and to offer humble

⁴³⁶ "Veramente questi cotali si possono chiamare un altro Cristo crocifisso unigenito mio Figliuolo, perchè anno preso a fare l'officio suo. Egli venne come tramezzatore, per levare la guerra e reconciliare in pace con meco l' uomo, col molto sostenere infino a l'obrobriosa morte della croce. Così questi cotali vanno crociati, facendosi mezzo con l'orazione e con la parola e con la buona e santa vita, ponendola per esempio dinanzi a loro. Rilucano le pietre preziose delle virtù con pazienza, portando e sopportando i loro difetti. Questi sono i lami con che essi pigliano l'anime" (*Il Dialogo*, CXLVI, 484).

⁴³⁷ "Where will you delight yourself? Upon the cross with the immaculate Lamb, seeking his love and the salvation of souls through continuous and humble prayers. Now here is all our perfection. There are many other things besides, but this is the principal one, where we receive such light that we are not able to be mistaken in the smaller works which follow. Delight, my daughter, to conform yourself with the shame of Christ." "Dove tu ti diletterai? In su la croce con lo immacolato Agnello, cercando il suo amore e la salute dell'anime, per continua e umile orazione. Or qui sta tutta la nostra perfezione. Molte cose anco ci sono; ma questa è la principale, dove riceviamo tanto lume, che non potiamo errare nelle minori operazioni che seguitano. Dilettati, figliuola mia, di conformarti con gli obbrobri di Cristo" (Letter 49, I, 191-192). Catherine wrote this letter to her friend, Alessa, who was a young widow of the important Saracini family. She had become a member of the Mantellate and Catherine often stayed in her home. Noffke sets this letter in late October or November, 1377.

⁴³⁸ "Ella ebbe quella carità increata che continuamente ardeva e consumava nel cuore suo: ella era mangiatrice e gustatrice delle anime: Sempre studiava la vigilia dell'orazione" (Letter 58, I, 220). This letter was sent to Suor Cristofora, the prioress of the Dominican monastery in Montepulciano. Noffke estimates that this letter was written between May 15 and August 31, 1379. Although Agnesa was not canonized until 1796, Catherine refers to her as "Madre nostra santa Agnesa."

tears and continuous prayers before God for the need of all the world. I wish, then, so that you may better be able to make a sacrifice to God for us, that you hide yourself in the side of Christ crucified."⁴³⁹

Just as Jesus intercedes for the world, the Father desires that other intercessors unite their voices with His Son:

And so I tell you what I want you to do. Never relax your desire from asking My help, nor lower your voice from calling to Me that I may be merciful to the world. Do not stop knocking at the door of My Truth, following His footsteps, and delight yourself on the cross with Him, eating the food of souls for the glory and praise of My name. And with the longing of your heart, roar over the dead child, the human race, whom you see driven to such misery that the tongue would not be able to describe it. With this roaring and crying I will want to be merciful to the world. And this is what I ask from My servants. And this will be the sign that in truth they love Me.⁴⁴⁰

God's servants carry their neighbors spiritually by their love for truth, their toils, and prayers: "But I hope in the supreme and eternal goodness of God that He will render the members healthy and not sick, fragrant and not rotten, and they will fashion these members upon the shoulders of the true servants of God, lovers of the truth, with many toils, sweat and tears, and humble, continuous and faithful prayers."⁴⁴¹ Catherine recounts the Father's promise to respond to the intercession

⁴³⁹ "Acciocchè per amore del sangue tu dia il sangue, e la vita per amore della vita. Ora è il tempo da morire spasimata per onore di Dio e per salute dell'anime; e offerire lagrime umili, e continue orazioni dinanzi a Dio per la necessità di tutto il mondo. Voglio dunque, acciò che meglio si possa fare sacrificio a Dio di noi, che tu ti nasconda nel costato di Cristo crocifisso" (Letter 300, IV, 263). Catherine wrote this letter to her friend, Monna Agnesa di Francesco Pipino, the wife of the tailor in Florence. This letter states that it was written on the fourth day of October. The year is certainly 1378, established by a number of factors.

⁴⁴⁰ "E così ti dico ch'io voglio che tu facci: che tu non allenti mai il desiderio tuo di chiedere l'aiutorio mio, nè abassi la voce tua di chiamare a me ch'io facci misericordia al mondo. Nè ti ristare di bussare alla porta della mia Verità, seguitando le vestigie sue; e diletta in croce con lui, mangiando il cibo de l'anime per gloria e loda del nome mio. E con ansietà di cuore muggiare sopra il morto del figliuolo de l'umana generazione, il quale vedi condotto a tanta miseria che la lingua tua non sarebbe sufficiente a narrarla. Con questo muggio e grido vorrò fare misericordia al mondo. E questo è quello che Io richieggo da' servi miei, e questo mi sarà segno che in verità m'amino" (*Il Dialogo*, CVII, 299-300). For a comparison of desire and prayer to Christ's sacrifice, see Letter 296.

⁴⁴¹ "Ma spero nella somma ed eterna bontà di Dio, che gli renderà membri sani e non infermi, odoriferi e non putridi; e fabbricherannosi questi membri sopra le spalle de' veri servi di Dio amatori della verità, con molte fatiche, sudori e lacrime, e umile, continua e fedele orazione" (Letter 341, V, 136). Noffke assigns the date of this letter between December 15, 1379, and January 30, 1380. For another reference to intercession, see Letter 272 and Letter 332.

of these servants: "And because they went out from Me, I love them ineffably and I will be merciful to them by means of My servants."⁴⁴²

Catherine calls those who cooperate with God's redeeming work, other *christs*. Thus, she prays: "And, as I see, You call Your servants *christs*, and by this means You wish to take away death and to give life to the world. And in what way? That they may walk courageously by the way of Your Word, with care and with burning desire, seeking Your honor and the salvation of souls, patiently bearing for this [cause] sufferings, torments, shame, and reproaches from wherever they may come."⁴⁴³ In her other writings, Catherine usually applies the title *christs* to the clergy.⁴⁴⁴ In this prayer, Catherine extends the title of *christs* to all those who walk by the way of the Word, seeking God's honor and the salvation of souls.

These servants of God imitate Jesus with their sufferings but most especially by uniting their desire with Jesus:

And with these finite sufferings, by their infinite desire, You wish to give them refreshment, that is, to answer their prayers and to fulfill their desires. But if they were to suffer only physically, without [infinite] desire, it would not be enough, neither for them nor for the others, just as the Passion in the Word, without the power of the Godhead would not have satisfied for the salvation of the human race. O You who are best at providing a remedy, give us these *christs*, who live continually in vigil and in tears and in prayer for the salvation of the world. You call them Your *christs* because they are conformed to Your only begotten Son.⁴⁴⁵

On the cross, Jesus gave Himself for humanity in a total way. For Catherine, ministry for souls must be a total self-giving that imitates Jesus' self-giving. Thus, she exhorts the Bishop of Florence to give Jesus a drink by which she means to share Jesus' desire for souls and to give his life for his people as Jesus did:

⁴⁴² "E perchè sono esciti da me, amoli ineffabilmente, e farò loro misericordia col mezzo de' servi miei" (Letter 272, IV, 161). This letter was written to Raimondo. Noffke dates this letter on October 10, 1377, or shortly afterwards. For a similar reference, see *Il Dialogo*, XVIII.

⁴⁴³ "Ma, come vedo, tu chiami cristi li tuoi servi, e con questo mezzo vuoi togliere la morte e rendere la vita al mondo. E in che modo? Che essi camminino virilmente per la via del Verbo, con sollicitudine e con affocato desiderio, procurando lo tuo onore e la salute dell'anime, per questo sostenendo pazientemente pene tormenti obbrobrii e rimproverii da qualunque gli siano fatti" (*Oratio* XII, 152). Catherine gave this prayer on Passion Sunday, March 27, 1379.

⁴⁴⁴ See Letter 2, I, 5; Letter 191, III, 145; *Il Dialogo*, CXIII, 319; *Il Dialogo*, CXV, 321, 324; *Il Dialogo*, CXVI, 325.

⁴⁴⁵ "Con le quali pene finite, all'infinito desiderio loro tu li vuoi dare refrigerio, cioè esaudire i prieghi ed impire i desiderii loro. Ma se patessero solamente corporalmente, senza il desiderio sopradetto, non gli basterebbe, né a essi né a gli altri, si come la passione nel Verbo, senza la virtù della deità non arebbe satisfatto alla salute della generatione umana. O rimediatore ottimo, danne adunque a noi di questi cristi, gli quali vivono continuamente in vigilie, in lacrime, in orationi per la salute del mondo. Tu gli chiami cristi tuoi perchè sono conformati nel tuo unigenito Figliuolo" (*Oratio* XII, 152).

Give Him to drink, since so sweetly He asks you for it. If you would say, 'My daughter, I do not have that to give Him,' already I have said that I desire and wish that you may be fixed and nailed on the cross where we find the slain lamb bleeding from every part.... Then we are not able to say that He did not give us to drink, that is, in taking the wine of the parched and ineffable desire which He has for our salvation. I beg you, Father, as a true shepherd to lay down your life for your subjects and your little sheep.... May He grant me the grace and mercy to see you, for the honor of God and for the holy food, open your body and bleed, just as He was opened for us.⁴⁴⁶

In addition to their intercession, believers must proclaim God's word. Catherine has a deep reverence for the power of truth and she is convinced that the work of salvation necessitates that truth be proclaimed. She asserts: "It is no longer the time for sleeping but for waking from the sleep of negligence...really marrying the truth with the ring of the most holy faith and announcing the truth, never silencing it for any fear, but widely and generously, and being disposed to give your life, if needed, totally intoxicated with the blood of the humble and immaculate Lamb, drawing it from the breasts of His spouse, the holy Church."⁴⁴⁷

The apostles are her models for those who proclaim the truth fearlessly because they shared Jesus' hunger for humanity: "After the fire of the Holy Spirit came upon them, they mounted the pulpit of the burning cross. There they felt and tasted the hunger of the Son of God and the love that He carried for humanity. Then their words went out as the burning sword goes out from a furnace. With this heat they penetrated the hearts of the listeners and drove out the devils."⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁶ "Dateli bere, poi che tanto dolcemente ve ne dimanda. Se mi diceste: 'Figliuola mia, io non ò che darli' - già v'ò detto che io desidero e voglio che siate confitto e chiavellato in croce, dove noi troviamo l'agnello svenato che da ogni parte versa.... Adunque non potiamo dire che non ci abbia dato bere, cioè di tollare el vino dell'assetato e ineffabile desiderio che elli à della salute nostra. Voi, padre, come pastore vero, prego che poniate la vita per li sudditi e pecorelle vostre.... Mi conceda gratia e misericordia che io vega, per l'onore di Dio e per lo santo cibo, isvenare ed uprire il corpo vostro, sì come egli è uperto per noi" (Letter 136, II, 259). Catherine wrote this letter to the bishop of Florence, Angelo Da Ricasoli. Noffke considers this letter to have been written in mid-July 1375 or slightly later.

⁴⁴⁷ "Non è più tempo da dormire, ma è da destarsi dal sonno della negligenza...e realmente sposare la verità coll'anello della santissima fede e annunciare la verità non tacendola mai per veruno timore, ma larga e liberale; e disponersi a dare la vita, se bisogna; tutto ebbro di sangue dell'umile e immacolato Agnello, traendolo dalle mammelle della sposa sua della santa Chiesa" (Letter 330, V, 87). Noffke suggests between December 15 and 20 as a possible date for this letter.

⁴⁴⁸ "Poi che 'l fuoco dello Spirito santo fu venuto sopra di loro, essi salsero in sul polpito della affocata croce: ine sentivano e gustavano la fame del Figliuolo di Dio e l'amore che portava all'uomo. Allora escivano le parole di loro, come esce el coltello affocato della fornace: con questo caldo fendevano e' cuori degli uditori e cacciavano le dimonia" (Letter 198, III, 172). Catherine wrote this letter to Bartolomeo Dominici. Noffke locates this letter in early April before the celebration of Easter on April 13, 1376. Similarly, Catherine asserts that Paul proclaimed the Word without fear:

Catherine spurs preachers to realize the importance of their ministry for souls, as she does in a letter to an Augustinian friar: "And because...we ought to be eaters and tasters of souls, my soul desires to see this in you, because you are a preacher of the word of God. I wish that you be a vessel of love, full of the fire of most burning charity to carry the sweet name of Jesus and to sow this incarnate word of Jesus in the field of the soul...harvesting the seed, that is, bearing fruit in creatures, you return them to the honor of the eternal Father."⁴⁴⁹

One of Catherine's great desires is the renewal of the Church. She considers the clergy to be responsible for its sad condition. In *Il Dialogo*, the Father laments: "Look and see how My spouse has soiled her face, as a leper through impurity and selfish love, and is inflated through the pride and avarice of those who are fed at her breast, that is the Christian religion, the universal body, and indeed the mystic body of the holy Church. This, I say of My ministers, who are those who are fed and remain at her breasts."⁴⁵⁰

A number of her letters are written to the hierarchy, challenging them to imitate Jesus' desire for souls. In a letter to the Cardinal of Ostia, Pierre d'Estaing, she urges him to fulfill his responsibilities as one of the Papal Legates to Italy, more as a shepherd of souls and less as a secular administrator. She counsels him: "May you eat at the table of the most holy cross from the food of the honor of God and of the salvation of souls. And He does not wish that you eat other than at the cross, carrying the bodily efforts of many anxious desires; as the Son of God did, who at the same time suffered the torments in His body and the pain of desire; and greater was the cross of His desire, than was His bodily cross."⁴⁵¹

"Paul takes this will and understands it, and having understood, he gives himself immediately to give honor to God and his effort to his neighbor. He announces the truth bravely, and does not delay through negligence, but is attentive and is made a vessel of love, filled with fire, to carry and to preach the Word of God." "Paulo piglia questa volontà e intendela, e intesa, si dà subito a dare l'onore a Dio e la fadiga al prossimo. Bandisce virilmente la verità, e non tarda per negligentia, ma è sollicito e è fatto vasello di dilectione, pieno di fuoco, a portare e a predicare la parola di Dio" (Letter 226, III, 297). Noffke sets this letter around February 17 of 1376.

⁴⁴⁹ "E perchè...doviamo essere mangiatori e gustatori dell'anime, questo desidera l'anima mia di vedere in voi, perchè sete banditore della parola di Dio. Voglio che siate uno vasello di dilectione, pieno di fuoco d'ardentissima carità, a portare el dolce nome di Gesù e seminare questa parola incarnata di Gesù nel campo dell'anima...ricogliendo el seme, cioè facendo frutto nelle creature, voi el riponiate nell'onore del Padre eterno" (Letter 52, I, 203). This letter was written to Frate Jeronimo.

⁴⁵⁰ "Ma mira e vede come la Sposa mia à lordata la faccia sua, come è lebrosa per immondizia e amore proprio ed enfiata per superbia ed avarizia di coloro che si pascono al petto suo, cioè la religione cristiana, corpo universale, ed anco il corpo mistico della santa Chiesa: ciò dico de' miei ministri, i quali sono quelli che si pascono e stanno alle mammelle sue" (*Il Dialogo*, XIV, 45).

⁴⁵¹ "[V]oi mangiate alla mensa della santissima Croce il cibo dell'onore di Dio e della salute delle anime. E non vuole che sia mangiato altro che in croce, portando le fatiche corporali con molti ansietati desiderii; siccome fece il Figliuolo di Dio, che insieme sostenne li tormenti nel corpo e

In a similar way, Catherine charges the Archbishop of Pisa to imitate the good Shepherd in taking care of his people, asserting that not only their salvation but his own depends upon this: "You, the shepherd, will have learned the rule and doctrine of the good Shepherd, who has laid down his life for us. And so I said that I desired to see you a good shepherd because in any other way or manner I do not see your salvation or theirs....You know that you are a father. Then as a father, feed your children."⁴⁵²

Catherine frequently writes to Gregory XI and Urban VI to remind them of the spiritual nature of their office. Thus, she tries to dissuade Gregory XI from continuing his aggressive military approach in restoring his temporal authority: "The treasure of the Church is the blood of Christ, given as the price of the soul because the treasure of the blood was not paid for the sake of material things but for the salvation of the human race."⁴⁵³ She invites Gregory to beat his subjects with sticks of kindness and peace rather than with sticks of war.⁴⁵⁴

Catherine is well aware that the care of souls brings suffering. Thus, she tries to encourage Urban VI to bear the burdens of the schism by reminding him that his sufferings for the Church imitate the saving actions of Jesus: "And enduring much He gave back life to the dead child, the human race. It seems, most holy Father, that this Eternal Truth wants to make of you another Him, and just as you are His vicar, Christ on earth, so in bitterness and in endurance He wishes that you reform His and your sweet Bride, that for so long has remained totally pallid."⁴⁵⁵

Catherine is well aware that many disengage themselves from the labors of active ministry because of the sufferings which follow the care of souls. A number of

la pena del desiderio; e maggiore era la croce del desiderio, che non era la croce corporale" (Letter 11, I, 36). Noffke dates this letter in October 1377. For another reference to the responsibility of the clergy to be good shepherds, see Letter 341.

⁴⁵² "Voi, pastore, averete imparata la regola e dottrina del Pastore buono, che ha posto la vita per noi. E però io dissi che desideravo di vedervi pastore buono; perchè altra via nè modo non ci veggio per salute vostra e loro.... Voi sapete che sete Padre; adunque, siccome Padre, nutricate li vostri figliuoli" (Letter 243, IV, 42). Noffke dates this letter between January 20 and February 28, 1378.

⁴⁵³ "Il tesoro della Chiesa è il sangue di Cristo, dato in prezzo per l'anima; perocchè il tesoro del sangue non è pagato per la sostanza temporale, ma per salute dell'umana generazione" (Letter 209, III, 215). Noffke dates this letter after January 17 and very likely just after February 3, 1377.

⁴⁵⁴ "You are to beat them more with the stick of kindness, of love, and of peace than with the stick of war, and it will turn out that you will have back what is yours spiritually and temporally." "Voi gli batterete più col bastone delle benignità, dell'amore e della pace, che col bastone della guerra; e veravvi riavuto il vostro spiritualmente e temporalmente" (Letter 209, III, 215).

⁴⁵⁵ "E con molto sostenere rendè la vita al figliuolo morto dell'umana generazione. Pare, santissimo Padre, che questa Verità eterna voglia fare di voi un altro lui; e si perchè sete vicario suo Cristo in terra, e si perchè nell'amaritudine e nel sostenere vuole che reformiate la dolce Sposa sua e vostra, che tanto tempo è stata tutta impallidita" (Letter 346, V, 162). Noffke places this letter to Urban VI between December 20-31, 1378.

her letters are written to encourage perseverance in the difficulties of ministry.⁴⁵⁶ When Raimondo discovered that assassins were waiting to ambush him, he turned back from his papal mission to the French King, Charles V, and stayed in Genoa. Catherine writes to him, urging him to find healing and renewed strength in the blood. She bids him to imitate Jesus' willingness to suffer for the honor of God and for souls: "Lose your weakness and blindness in the blood of the immaculate Lamb. And with the light, run as a manly knight to seek the honor of God, the good of the holy Church and the salvation of souls in the blood."⁴⁵⁷

Catherine frequently uses the expression "to lay down your life." Twice she appeals to Gregory XI to be a shepherd who will lay down his life for his sheep.⁴⁵⁸ She discloses to Niccolò da Osimo, the secretary to Gregory XI, her desire to see him "disposed to lay down your life, if needed, in particular, in the mystic body of the Church for the reformation of My Bride."⁴⁵⁹ She informs Urban VI that if he dies to his selfish love for himself and is founded in charity, he will lay down his life for his sheep as a good pastor.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁶ Letter 296 provides us with a good example of this teaching: "For we are not able to eat in truth without enduring much. But it must be eaten with the teeth of true patience and with the mouth of holy desire and upon the cross of many sufferings, from whatever side they come, whether through criticism or through the outrages of the world, and to endure them all even to death. Now is the time to show if we are lovers of Christ crucified or not and if we delight ourselves with this food." "[P]erchè nol potemo mangiare in verità senza molto sostenere; ma co' denti della vera pazienza e con la bocca del santo desiderio si conviene mangiare, e in su la croce delle molte tribulazioni, da qualunque lato elle vengono, o per mormorazioni o per scandali del mondo; e tutte sostenere infino alla morte. Ora è il tempo di mostrare se noi siamo amatori di Cristo crocifisso, o no; e se noi ci dilettiamo di questo cibo" (Letter 296, IV, 244-245). Catherine wrote this letter to Don Giovanni dalle Celle, a Vallombrosan monk at the beginning of the schism. Don Giovanni had become a monk while quite young. When he was superior of S. Trinità in Florence, he committed some crime that caused him to be imprisoned for a year. He spent the rest of his life doing penance and was the author of an extensive number of letters on spiritual subjects. Catherine considered him a holy ally. Noffke dates this letter between October 20 and October 31, 1377.

⁴⁵⁷ "[P]erdete la debilezza e cecità nel sangue dello immacolato Agnello; e col lume correte come virile cavaliere, a cercare l'onore di Dio, il bene della santa Chiesa e la salute dell'anime nel sangue" (Letter 333, V, 98). Noffke considers this letter to have been written between January 5-20, 1379. For another reference to the strength that may be found in the blood, see Letter 257.

⁴⁵⁸ "Diventarete e sarete pastore buono, che porrete la vita per le pecorelle vostre" (Letter 229, III, 308). Another example is, "...si come pastore buono, che debba ponere la vita per le pecorelle sue" (Letter 239, IV, 27).

⁴⁵⁹ "Ma ora ti dico, e voglio, che tu cresca fame e desiderio, e dispongati di ponere la vita, se bisogna, in particolare nel corpo mistico della Chiesa, per reformazione della sposa mia" (Letter 282, IV, 198).

⁴⁶⁰ "Io Catarina, serva e schiava de' servi di Gesù Cristo, scrivo a voi nel prezioso sangue suo; con desiderio di vedervi fondato in vera e perfetta carità, acciocchè, come pastore buono, poniate la vita per le pecorelle vostre. E veramente, santissimo Padre, che solo colui che è fondato in carità, è quello

Twice she urges Angelo Da Ricasoli, the bishop of Florence, to lay down his life for his sheep,⁴⁶¹ and she encourages Angelo Correr, the bishop-elect of Castello, to be disposed to give his life.⁴⁶² Likewise, she invites the Archbishop of Pisa to lay down his life for his sheep in imitation of Christ.⁴⁶³ She invites Don Giovanni, a monk, to lay down his life for the honor of God and the good of the Church by coming to the aid of Urban VI.⁴⁶⁴

Catherine's own ministry epitomizes her teachings on service for the sake of souls. Catherine sees herself called to the ministry of the Word. Raimondo reports on the extraordinary results of her preaching in the rural area outside of Siena:

I sometimes saw a thousand or more men and women, from the mountain areas and from the regions outside of Siena hastening together to see and to hear her, as though called by an invisible trumpet. And not only by her word but by the sight of her, they soon came to sorrow for their evil deeds, weeping and grieving for their sins, they rushed to the confessors, of which I was one, and they confessed with such contrition that no one could doubt that a great flood of grace was poured into their hearts from on high.⁴⁶⁵

Responding to criticisms of her prolonged absence from her city, Catherine asserts her confidence in her call to ministry and also her determination to persevere despite the difficulties:

che si dispone a morire per amore di Dio e salute dell'anime; perocchè è privato dell'amore proprio, di sè medesimo" (Letter 291, IV, 221-222).

⁴⁶¹ "Non vorrei, carissimo e reverendissimo e dolcissimo mio padre in Cristo Gesù, che questo divenisse a voi, ma pregovi che siate pastore vero a ponere la vita per loro" (Letter 88, II, 79). "Voi, padre, come pastore vero, prego che poniate la vita per li sudditi e pecorelle vostre" (Letter 136, II, 259).

⁴⁶² "Non è più tempo da dormire, ma da destarsi dal sonno della negligenza, e levarsi dalla cecità della ignoranza, e realmente sposare la verità con l'anello della santissima fede, non tacendola per veruno timore, ma largo e liberale, disposto a dare la vita, se bisogna; tutto ebbro del sangue dell'umile e immacolato Agnello, traendolo dalle mammelle della dolce Sposa sua, cioè della santa Ecclesia" (Letter 341, V, 136).

⁴⁶³ "Vi disponiate a porre la vita per le pecorelle vostre, imparando dalla prima dolce Verità Cristo Gesù, che per onore del Padre e salute nostra corse all'obbrobriosa morte della santissima croce" (Letter 243, IV, 40).

⁴⁶⁴ "Escano fuore i servi di Dio, e vengano ad annunciare e sostenere per la verità; chè ora è il tempo loro. Venite, e non indugiate; con ferma disposizione di volere attendere solo all'onore di Dio, e bene della santa Chiesa; e per questo ponere la vita, se bisognerà" (Letter 322, V, 69).

⁴⁶⁵ "Vidi ego quandoque mille vel eo amplius utriusque sexus homines, simul de montanis et aliis regionibus comitatus Senensis, ad eam videndam et audiendam, tuba vocante invisibili, concurrisse: qui et quae non modo ad verbum ejus, sed ad ejus aspectum, mox de suis compungebantur criminibus, flentes ac lugentes sua peccata: currebant ad Confessores, quorum unus ego fui: et cum tanta contritione confitebantur, quod nulli poterat esse dubium, quin magna copia gratiae in eorum cordibus esset ex alto diffusa." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, II, ccxxix, 922.

It was declared by that Truth... saying, "Persevere in eating at the table at which I have placed you. I have set you at the table of the cross to take your sufferings and many criticisms, to taste and to seek my honor and the salvation of souls. And therefore the souls in this place are placed in your hands that they may go out from the hands of the devil and they may make peace with Me and with their neighbor. Do not leave them until that which was begun is accomplished. Therefore return there and do not fear.... I will be that one who will act for you."

[She responds] "I entrust myself in our Lord Jesus Christ and not in people. I will do so. And if they will give me defamation and persecutions, I will give tears and continuous prayer, as much as God will give me the grace. And whether the devil wishes or not, I will bind myself to exercise my life in the honor of God and the salvation of souls for all the world, and especially for my city."⁴⁶⁶

For Catherine, following in the footsteps of Christ entails imitating Jesus' desire for the salvation of souls. Since one cannot return God's gratuitous love directly, one must give gratuitous love to one's neighbors. Indeed, virtue only has life as it is brought to birth in the service of one's neighbor. The greatest service for our neighbors is to bring souls to God, which Catherine calls "eating and tasting souls." Souls are eaten at the table of the cross, that is, in the knowledge of God's goodness manifested especially in the Passion and in the knowledge of one's own weakness.

Christians are called to be other *christs*, by carrying their neighbors through intercession and by proclaiming to them God's truth, sharing the desire of Christ for their salvation despite difficulties. This ministry for souls demands a total self-giving in laying down their lives for their neighbors in imitation of Jesus' total self-giving. Such self-giving is always dependent on the grace obtained through Jesus' self-giving. The culmination of Catherine's own self-offering for the Church can be seen in her prayer two and a half months before she died: "O Eternal God, receive the sacrifice of my life in this mystic body of the holy Church."⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁶ "Fu dichiarato da quella Verità...dicendo: 'Persevera di mangiare alla mensa alla quale io v'ò posto. Io v'ò posto alla mensa della croce a prender con vostra pena e molte mormorazioni, a gustare e a cercare l'onore di me e la salute dell'anime. E però l'anime che in questo loco t'ò poste nelle mani perchè ell' escano dalle mani delle dimonia e pacifichinsi meco e col prossimo loro, non le lasciare infino a tanto che è compiuto quello che è cominciato.... Però vi tornate; e non temete: ch'io sarò colui che farò per voi'.... Io mi confido in Domino nostro Jesu Christo, e no negli uomini. Io farò così. E se daranno a me infamie e persecuzioni, e io darò lagrime e continua orazione, quanto Dio mi darà la grazia. E voglia il dimonio o no, io mi impegnerò di esercitare la vita mia nell'onore di Dio e la salute dell'anime per tutto quanto il mondo, e singolarmente per la mia città" (Letter 122, II, 206-207). Catherine sent this letter to Salvi di Pietro, a goldsmith in Siena. Noffke places this letter between late August and early September 1377. For a reference to Mary Magdalene as a preacher, see Letter 61.

⁴⁶⁷ "O Dio eterno, ricevi il sacrificio della vita mia in questo corpo mistico della santa Chiesa" (Letter 371, V, 277). This prayer is contained in a letter to Pope Urban which Noffke dates as February 15, 1380.

Conclusion

The mystery of salvation is an overarching concern for Catherine. She sees this mystery rooted in God's purpose in creating humanity, which is for her the truth that underlies human existence. Catherine makes use of the traditional explanations of redemption, with symbols and language borrowed from the Fathers of the Church and from medieval theologians, particularly from Anselm and Thomas. However, her pastoral thrust drives her to focus especially on God's truth, His motive in the process of salvation.

For Catherine, God's truth is the truth of His desire. These two ideas, truth and desire, are two strands woven throughout her writings. In the concrete reality of the blood, these strands are made most evident. The most basic truth is that God is. God alone has existence⁴⁶⁸ and everything, especially life, is a gift from God and depends upon God.⁴⁶⁹ In creating the human race, God desires that those whom He creates should share life with Him eternally.⁴⁷⁰ The first parents by their choices rejected the purpose for which they were created,⁴⁷¹ yet their disobedience did not end God's desire to share His life with those whom He created.

His Word, the visible manifestation of the Father's desire, seeks to fulfill the Father's truth by embracing suffering in order to make satisfaction for human

⁴⁶⁸ "Everything is made and created by My goodness, because I am the one who is, and without Me nothing is made, except only sin which is not." "[P]erché ogni cosa è fatta e creata da la mia bontà, però ch'io so' Colui che so', e senza me veruna cosa è fatta, se non solo il peccato che non è" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXIV, 437).

⁴⁶⁹ "Let us see that He is that one who is infinite good, and we are those who are not through ourselves. For our being and every gift which is given beyond our being is from Him." "Vediamo che egli è colui che è bene infinito, e noi siamo coloro che non siamo per noi medesimi. Però che l'essere nostro e ogni gratia che è posta sopra l'essere aviamo da lui" (Letter 13, I, 46). "You alone are who is, and being and every gift beyond being I have from You, which You gave me and give Me for love and not as owed." "Però che tu se' solo colui che se', e l'essere e ogni grazia che ài posta sopra l'essere ò da te, che me 'l desti e dai per amore, e non per debito" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXIV, 423).

⁴⁷⁰ "Questa verità è che Io l'avevo creato a la imagine e similitudine mia perchè egli avesse vita eterna, e partecipasse me e gustasse la somma ed eterna dolcezza e bontà mia" (*Il Dialogo*, XXI, 59).

⁴⁷¹ "Sicchè per amore, dunque, Dio ci creò all'immagine e similitudine sua, e per amore ci donò il suo Figliuolo, acciocchè ci restituisse; ricreandoci a Grazia nel sangue suo, volle Dio col mezzo del Figliuolo mostrare a noi la sua verità, e la dolce volontà sua, che non cerca nè vuole altro che la nostra santificazione. La sua verità era questa, che in verità aveva creato l'uomo, però che partecipasse e godesse nell'eterna sua visione, dove l'anima riceve la beatitudine sua. Onde per lo peccato commesso da Adam non si adempiva questa verità nell'uomo. Volendo Dio adunque adempire questa verità, esso medesimo ci costringe con la sua carità, e donaci quella cosa ch'egli ha più cara, cioè il Figliuolo unigenito; e pongli questa obediencia, che egli restituisca l'uomo, e dalla morte torni alla vita" (Letter 259, IV, 101-102).

sins.⁴⁷² Jesus' thirst for the honor of the Father and our salvation moves Him to offer His obedience "with such desire, that the pain of desire is greater to Him than the pain of the body."⁴⁷³ Jesus' desire is "burning"⁴⁷⁴ and "crucified."⁴⁷⁵ His physical sufferings are finite but the desire that He has for the honor of the Father and for our salvation is infinite.⁴⁷⁶ The Word, First Truth,⁴⁷⁷ undoes the lies of the devil.⁴⁷⁸

The blood of Jesus confirms the truth of the Father's desire to give us eternal life.⁴⁷⁹ In the blood we know God's desire for us which Catherine calls His "fire of love."⁴⁸⁰ Because of the blood, we know that God desires our sanctification,⁴⁸¹ and

472 "E però Dio volle insieme purgare la colpa e compire la sua verità nell'uomo: e perciò questa verità detta costrinse il Padre eterno, e per l'amore ineffabile, ch'egli ebbe a noi, e alla verità sua, ci donò la verità del Verbo del suo Figliuolo, e vestillo della nostra umanità, acciò che in essa col sostenere, fosse soddisfatto alle nostre colpe, e così si compisse la sua verità in noi" (Letter 354, V, 205). "Vedesti ancora, Padre eterno, la pena che seguitava al tuo Figliuolo per restituire l'umana generazione a gracia e per adempire la verità tua in noi" (*Oratio* IV, 44).

473 "Ine vediamo l'obedienza di Cristo crocifisso, che, per obedire, muore; e fa questa obedienza con tanto desiderio, che maggiore gli è la pena del desiderio, che la pena del corpo" (Letter 34, I, 129).

474 "Questo affocato desiderio!" (Letter 225, III, 291).

475 "...el crociato desiderio nella mente" (*Oratio* XVI, 188).

476 "Non pare che questo Agnello immacolato si possa saziare; grida in croce satollato da obbrobri, e dice che ha sete. Poniamochè corporalmente esso avesse sete, ma maggiore era la sete del santo desiderio che egli aveva della salute dell'anime. O inestimabile dolcissima Carità, e non pare che tu dia tanto, dandoti a tanti tormenti, che non rimanga maggiore il desiderio che egli aveva della salute dell'anime di più voler dare tutto. N'è cagion l'amore. Non me ne maraviglio: chè l'amore tuo era infinito, e la pena era finita. E però gli era maggiore la croce del desiderio, che la croce del corpo" (Letter 16, I, 51-52). "Dentro in sè truoviamo Dio, cioè la natura divina unita con la natura umana; truoviamo il fuoco dell'amore che per l'apertura del lato ci manifesta il secreto del cuore, mostrando che perchè non era comparazione della pena finita sua all'amore infinito" (Letter 55, I, 213).

477 "la prima dolce Verità." See, for examples, Letters 3, 7, 8 and 16. "la mia Verità" (*Il Dialogo*, XXIX). "In prima a la natura umana acciò che manifestassi a noi la verità invisibile del Padre eterno, la quale verità tu esso se'.... E tutto questo facesti per manifestare la verità della volontà del Padre, che non vuole altro che la nostra salute" (*Oratio* XVIII, 202).

478 "Anco con la verità confuse e distrusse la bugia del dimonio" (*Il Dialogo*, XXVII, 74).

479 "Bene el vediamo manifestamente: che se in verità non ci avesse creati per darci vita eterna, perchè godessimo el suo sommo e infinito bene, non ci avrebbe dato siffatto Ricomperatore, nè dato sè medesimo, cioè tutto sè Dio e tutto uomo. Adunque bene è la verità che 'l sangue di Cristo ci manifesta e fa chiari d'essa verità della dolce volontà sua" (Letter 227, III, 302-303). "Dobbiamo vedere che Dio sommamente ci ama, e per amore si mosse e crearci alla sua imagine e similitudine per darci a godere l'eterna sua visione. Chi ci manifesta questa verità, e questo amore? Il sangue dell'umile e immacolato Agnello. Non ci è nascosta questa verità; il sangue ce la manifesta. Che se Dio non ci avesse creati per lo fine che detto è, e non ci amasse inestimabilmente; già non ci avrebbe dato siffatto ricomperatore" (Letter 9, I, 31-32).

480 "Nel sangue troverete il fuoco dell'amore" (Letter 155, III, 15).

481 "La volontà sua è la nostra santificazione: questa è la verità; e per questo fine ci creò Dio, cioè perchè fussimo santificati in lui a loda e gloria del nome suo, e acciò che noi godessimo e gustassimo la eterna sua visione" (Letter 253, IV, 73).

that everything that happens in His Providence serves His desire to sanctify us in Him, to fulfill His truth in us.⁴⁸² In the awareness of the blood, we know the truth of God's desire for us in our own lives.⁴⁸³

Jesus desires us now as much as He did on the Cross.⁴⁸⁴ He asks for a response,⁴⁸⁵ which is our desire, demonstrated by virtue.⁴⁸⁶ His blood is transmitted through the sacraments,⁴⁸⁷ and through awareness of His love obtained in our self-knowledge.⁴⁸⁸ In receiving the blood, we know God's "fire," His desire for humanity.⁴⁸⁹ Even the sacraments are as effective as they are received with desire,⁴⁹⁰ and indeed the Eucharist can be received spiritually, if not sacramentally, by desire.⁴⁹¹ The blood is also received through the response of love in the soul of the one reflect-

⁴⁸² "Perchè il sangue manifesta la dolce sua volontà, che non cerca nè vuole altro che la nostra santificazione; e ciò che dà e permette, è dato a noi per questo fine; per amore è dato, acciocchè siamo santificati in lui. Così s'adempie la sua verità" (Letter 124, II, 216).

⁴⁸³ "E non dobbiamo passare punto di tempo, che l'occhio dell'intelletto nostro non si ponga per oggetto il sangue di Cristo crocifisso, dove truova la verità del sommo ed eterno Padre, manifestata a noi col mezzo del sangue" (Letter 331, V, 90).

⁴⁸⁴ "[G]ridò in croce 'Sitio', quasi dicesse: 'Io ò sì gran sete della vostra salute, ch'io non mi posso saziare. Datemi bere'. Dimandava el dolce Gesù di bere coloro ch'egli e' vedeva che non partecipavano la redentione del sangue suo... Poi e ora, continuamente ci adimanda questo bere e dimostra continua sete" (Letter 12, I, 39). "Non terminò il desiderio della salute vostra, ma la pena. Che se l'affetto della mia carità, la quale per mezzo di lui vi dimostrai, fosse allora terminata e finita in voi, voi non sareste, perchè siete fatti per amore; e se l'amore fosse ritratto a me, che Io non amasse l'essere vostro, voi non sareste" (*Il Dialogo*, LXXXII, 215-216).

⁴⁸⁵ "[C]ompi la verità: cioè, che fummo restituiti a Grazia quanto è dalla parte sua, se noi dalla nostra non ricalcitrriamo colle miserie e difetti nostril" (Letter 354, V, 205).

⁴⁸⁶ "Or corriamo, figliuolo dolcissimo, con santo e vero desiderio, abbracciando le virtù, con la memoria del dolce agnello, svenato con tanto ardentissimo amore" (Letter 69, I, 264).

⁴⁸⁷ "[P]er li forami del corpo di Cristo crocifisso esce e versa il sangue, ed ècci ministrato da' ministri della santa Chiesa. Priegovi, per l'amore di Cristo crocifisso, che voi riceviate il tesoro del sangue, el quale v'è dato dalla sposa di Cristo" (Letter 234, IV, 7).

⁴⁸⁸ "E il sangue cognoscerete nel cognoscimento di voi, però che la faccia dell'anima si lava col sangue: e 'l sangue è nostro...come vasello, empatevi del sangue di Cristo crocifisso" (Letter 193, III, 154).

⁴⁸⁹ "[N]on ci date sangue senza fuoco, nè fuoco senza sangue. Perocchè il sangue fu sparto con fuoco d'amore" (Letter 270, IV, 153).

⁴⁹⁰ "Questo cibo conforta poco e assai, secondo il desiderio di colui che 'l piglia" (*Il Dialogo*, LXVI, 168). "Cibo che sazia ogni affamato che di questo pane si diletta, ma non colui che non à fame; però che egli è uno cibo che vuole essere preso con la bocca del santo desiderio e gustato per amore" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXV, 433).

⁴⁹¹ "Virtualmente è comunicandosi per santo desiderio: si per desiderio della comunione e si per considerazione del sangue di Cristo crocifisso...perchè per amore vede che fu sparto" (*Il Dialogo*, LXVI, 168).

ing on the memory of the blood,⁴⁹² in knowledge of self.⁴⁹³ The renewal that Catherine prays for her disciples is the renewal of "burning and blazing desire."⁴⁹⁴ She challenges us to become "spouses of Truth,"⁴⁹⁵ announcing the truth even if it brings death,⁴⁹⁶ just as she had hoped her ministry of truth would bring death for herself.⁴⁹⁷

Reflecting on the blood, we comprehend that the truth of God's love also applies to our neighbors.⁴⁹⁸ We must do for our neighbors what we would do for God, and with the same disinterested love that God has shown us.⁴⁹⁹ But our efforts for our neighbors, although necessary, are finite and God asks for "infinite desire" on their behalf.⁵⁰⁰ Such desire for God and for souls is more important to God than are the sufferings themselves.⁵⁰¹ Desire for God, in imitation of Christ, makes one another Christ.⁵⁰²

⁴⁹² "Ma non ci darebbe però questo sangue vita, nè laverebbe la faccia dell'anima, se l'anima colla memoria del sangue, ripensando il fuoco della divina carità, non esercitasse la vita sua: Non per difetto del sangue, ma di noi, che non riceviamo il frutto del sangue: cioè non esercitando l'affetto della carità, che truova nel sangue: la quale carità, ricevendola, ci dà frutto di Grazia" (Letter 331, V, 88).

⁴⁹³ "Dove truoviamo questo sangue? Nel cognoscimento di noi" (Letter 102, II, 127).

⁴⁹⁴ "Però desidera l'anima con inestimabile amore che Dio per la sua infinita misericordia vi tolga ogni passione e tiepidezza di cuore, e riformivi uno altro uomo, cioè di reformatione d'affocato e ardentissimo desiderio: chè in altro modo non potreste adempire la volontà di Dio e il desiderio de' servi suoi" (Letter 255, IV, 83-84). Noffke considers this letter to have been written between June 18 and 22, 1376.

⁴⁹⁵ "[S]iate sposo della Verità" (Letter 102, II, 129).

⁴⁹⁶ "...realmente sposare la verità coll'anello della santissima fede e annunciare la verità non tacendola mai per veruno timore, ma larga e liberale; e disponersi a dare la vita, se bisogna" (Letter 330, V, 87).

⁴⁹⁷ "Che Dio mi dia grazia che io sia sempre amatrice e annunziatrice della verità, e per essa verità io muoia" (Letter 277, IV, 187).

⁴⁹⁸ "Che ci manifesta che in verità e' sia così? Il sangue sparto per noi con tanto fuoco d'amore.... La seconda, e ultima, è, che noi dobbiamo cognoscere e vedere la verità nel prossimo nostro, o grande o piccolo che sia, o sudditi o signori" (Letter 317, V, 42-43).

⁴⁹⁹ "E però v'ò posto il mezzo del prossimo vostro, acciò che faciate a lui quello che non potete fare a me, cioè d'amarlo senza alcuno rispetto di grazia e senza aspettare alcuna utilità. E io reputo che faciate a me quello che fate a lui" (*Il Dialogo*, LXIV, 164).

⁵⁰⁰ "Con le quali pene finite, all'infinito desiderio loro tu li vuoi dare refrigerio, cioè esaudire i prieghi ed impire i desiderii loro. Ma se patesseno solamente corporalmente, senza il desiderio sopradetto, non gli bastarebbe, né a essi né a gli altri, si come la passione nel Verbo, senza la virtù della deità non arebbe satisfatto alla salute della generatione umana" (*Oratio* XII, 152).

⁵⁰¹ "E dico che si punisce con la pena che si sostiene col desiderio, amore e contrizione del cuore, non per virtù della pena, ma per la virtù del desiderio dell'anima, siccome il desiderio ed ogni virtù vale ed à in sé vita per Cristo crocifisso unigenito mio Figliuolo, in quanto l'anima à tratto l'amore da lui e con virtù seguita le vestigie sue" (*Il Dialogo*, IV, 8-9).

⁵⁰² "Però che l'orazione, esercitandola per lo modo detto, unisce l'anima in Dio seguitando le

Transformed through the blood into other *christs*, we bestow upon our neighbors the love which we cannot bestow upon God. This love of neighbor, with the desire to "eat and taste souls," includes intercession, works of mercy, proclaiming the word, and offering whatever spiritual or material help we can. Its height is to be willing to lay down our lives, in imitation of the desire of Jesus to fulfill the truth of the Father's desire in creation.

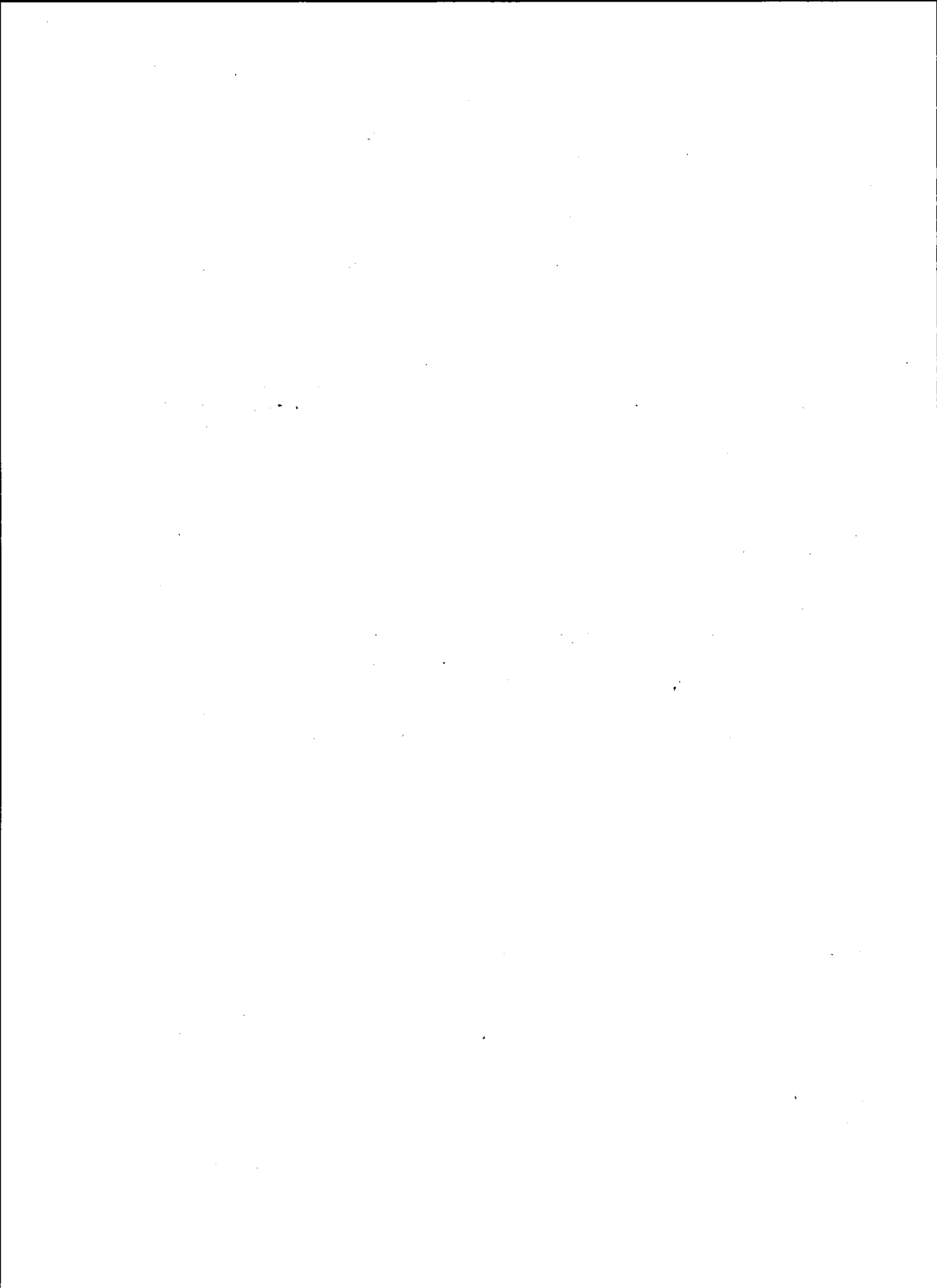
Giacinto D'Urso has commented on Catherine's basic approach to the mystery of salvation:

It is a train of thought, traced out with originality, with its own personality of concepts and forms, that can perhaps serve to focus better some classical theological theses, such as those concerning soteriology or the doctrine of salvation. Having precisely located the question [of soteriology] upon the plan of fulfilling the truth of the divine love, she is able to give the mystery of the redemption a sense that is more easily acceptable by the modern mentality, which does not accept too readily the idea of an inexorable justice that imposes the expiatory sacrifice on the Son of God.⁵⁰³

While Catherine's soteriological thought is not well-known, she clearly has a significant contribution to offer contemporary discussions of these issues. The prominence that Catherine gives to God's desire and truth as an explanation for the mystery of salvation would be particularly attractive to contemporary believers, who find the traditional emphasis on justice an overstatement of the biblical data. Catherine's soteriology possesses a comprehensive character, in that it encompasses the whole Christian life, including the sacraments and the individual's responsibilities to her or his neighbor. The vividness of Catherine's imagery and language makes her thoughts especially appealing. All of this suggests, then, that one may find in Catherine's writings on the mystery of salvation a rich source for further theological reflection.

vestigie di Cristo crocifisso, e così per desiderio, affetto e unione l'amore ne fa un'altro sè.... È la verità che per affetto d'amore l'anima diventa un altro lui" (*Il Dialogo*, I, 2).

⁵⁰³ "E' una linea originalmente tracciata, con personalità di concetti e di forme, che può forse servire a mettere meglio a fuoco alcune tesi teologiche classiche, come quelle riguardanti la soteriologia o dottrina della salvezza. Messo infatti il problema sul piano della verità dell'amore divino da compiere, può dare al mistero della redenzione un senso più facilmente accettabile dalla mentalità moderna, che non gradisce troppo l'idea di una inesorabile giustizia che impone il sacrificio espiatorio del Figlio di Dio." Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., "Il mistero di Cristo nella verità del Padre," *Angelicum* 64 (1987): 215.



CHAPTER 3

MARY IN THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF CATHERINE OF SIENA

"In the name of Jesus Christ crucified and of gentle Mary." With these words, Catherine begins her book, *Il Dialogo*, as well as all but a few of her three hundred eighty-two letters, indicating the close link that Catherine makes between gentle Mary and her crucified Son. Catherine's birth on March 25 in 1347, a year in which the customary date of the Annunciation coincided with Palm Sunday, might seem to have anticipated the close relationship Catherine would draw between Mary and the Redemption. For Catherine, Mary is not a passive or peripheral figure to the story of salvation but one who is vitally involved in its decisive moments.

As has been seen, Catherine, unlike a number of medieval authors, emphasizes the Incarnation as the beginning of the redemption. Thus, she writes:

This Word was engrafted in her flesh, this blessed and sweet field of Mary, as the seed that is cast on the earth. Through the warmth of the sun, it germinates and draws out the flower and the fruit and the shell remains on the earth. So, truly, [it was] through the warmth and the fire of divine charity which God had for the human race, casting the seed of His Word in the field of Mary. O blessed and sweet Mary, you have given us the flower of the sweet Jesus! And when did this blessed flower produce the fruit? When He was grafted on the wood of the most holy cross. Then we received perfect life.²

¹ "Al nome di Gesù Cristo crocifisso e di Maria dolce."

² "Questo benedetto e dolce campo di Maria fece in lei questo verbo inestato nella carne sua, come el seme che si gitta nella terra, che per lo caldo del sole germina e trae fuore el fiore e il frutto, e 'l guscio rimane alla terra. Così veramente, per lo caldo e fuoco della divina carità che Dio ebbe all'umana generatione, gittando el seme della parola sua nel campo di Maria. O beata e dolce Maria, ci ài donato el fiore del dolce Gesù! E quando produsse el frutto questo benedetto fiore? quando fu inestato in sul legno della santissima croce: allora ricevemmo vita perfetta" (Letter 144, II, 282). This letter was sent to Monna Pavola in very early July 1375. A similar passage may be found in Catherine's letter to Don Roberto da Napoli. Cf. Letter 342, V, 138. In *Il Dialogo*, Catherine shows the same connection between the Incarnation and the Redemption: "This mercy descended from heaven in the Incarnation of My Son. With what was it opened? With the key of His blood." "La quale misericordia discese di cielo nella incarnazione di questo mio Figliuolo. Con che s'aperse? Con la chiave del sangue suo" (*Il Dialogo*, XXVII, 73). We find the same relationship between the two mysteries in a prayer: "You grafted Yourself as a fruit on two trees. The first, to our human nature that You might show to us the invisible truth of the eternal Father, which truth You Yourself are. You made the second grafting with Your body upon the tree of the most holy cross, upon which tree neither the nails nor any other thing held You except the immeasurable love that You had for us.

According to Catherine, Mary's cooperation in the redemption is not confined to giving birth to the Savior. Mary is involved in the major moments of the redemption. If Christ crucified is Catherine's central focus, then it is not surprising that Catherine places Mary beside the cross. She affirms that Mary, like her Son, has been "wounded by the arrow of love for our salvation."³

Mary not only consents to Jesus' death for humanity but she "wishes that He die"⁴ because she is so eager that the salvation of humanity be accomplished. Mary seeks to prolong on earth Jesus' desire for "the honor of God and the salvation of souls" by prodding the apostles to take up her Son's ministry after Pentecost. In heaven, Mary, as the "advocate, mother of grace and mercy,"⁵ is still vitally involved in aiding souls to accept the fruits of Jesus' death. Catherine considers Mary to be particularly present to those who carry on her Son's mission for the salvation of souls. Catherine continually relates her reflections on Mary to the mystery of salvation.

Since Catherine did not write in a systematic way, we will glean her thought on Mary from her various writings and we will rely on incidents recorded in the early biographical accounts to illustrate her beliefs. Catherine's theological understandings of Mary are rooted in the Christian tradition. Yet, it will be clear that Catherine's intense evangelical zeal frequently gives a unique emphasis to the truths she received.

While Catherine's understanding of Mary has not been treated extensively, some authors have discussed aspects in various articles. Antonio D'Achille has examined the presentation of Mary in Catherine's writings.⁶ Roberto Moretti and Innocenzo Venchi, O.P., have investigated Mary in Catherine's prayers.⁷ Giacinto

And all this You did to manifest the truth of the will of the Father, that wants nothing other than our salvation. With this grafting You gave Your blood, which through the union with the divine nature has given life to us." "[A]vesti a noi t'innestasti sì come frutto in due arbori: in prima a la natura umana acciò che manifestassi a noi la verità invisibile del Padre eterno, la quale verità tu esso se'; el secondo innesto facesti del corpo tuo in su l'arbore della santissima croce, in sul quale arbore non ti tennero chiavelli né alcuna altra cosa se non l'amore smisurato che avesti a noi. E tutto questo facesti per manifestare la verità della volontà del Padre, che non vuole altro che la nostra salute. Di questo innesto fu prodotto il sangue tuo, el quale per l'unione della natura divina ha dato a noi vita" (*Oratio* XVIII, 202).

³ "Ella era vulnerata della saetta dell'amore della nostra salute" (Letter 30, I, 113).

⁴ "Vuole ch'egli muoia" (Letter 30, I, 113).

⁵ "La quale è nostra avvocata, madre di grazia e di misericordia" (Letter 184, III, 120). Noffke asserts that this letter was written near Holy Week, 1377.

⁶ Antonio D'Achille, "Maria negli scritti di S. Caterina da Siena," *Memorie Domenicane (Il Rosario)* (1919): 233-245.

⁷ Roberto Moretti, "La Madonna in una preghiera di S. Caterina da Siena," *La Patrona d'Italia*

D'Urso, O.P., has analyzed Catherine's treatment of Mary in Letter 144.⁸ The book, *Maria, Caterina e Altri*, published by *Il Centro Nazionale di Studi Cateriniani*, contains four chapters on elements of Catherine's perception of Mary.⁹ Authors, elsewhere, have treated Catherine's mariology in general,¹⁰ while some have touched upon Mary's relationship to the passion and death of Christ in particular.¹¹

It is my impression that Catherine's references to Mary have not been studied as a totality. This chapter will attempt to compile all of Catherine's references to Mary as well as the references of her early biographers regarding Catherine and Mary. We will try to discern Catherine's Marian theology from this assortment of references. This chapter will consider Mary as she is seen both in Catherine's life and in her thought. The particular concern will be to show how closely Catherine's thought on Mary relates to her thought on Jesus' saving mission. This connection will be more obvious in some references than in others. Nevertheless, the fact that this relationship pervades Catherine's thought on Mary should become quite evident.

The first section of this chapter will situate Catherine's thought by reviewing Mary's place in the general culture and devotion that pervaded Catherine's environment. We will look at Catherine's Marian practices and the Marian devotions to which she makes reference, as well as the ways in which Catherine experienced Mary's care in her own life and ministry.

In the second and third sections of the chapter, we will explore Catherine's own Marian understandings. These two sections will be divided between Catherine's thought on Mary in relation to the objective redemption and Catherine's thought on Mary in relation to the subjective redemption, relying on a common distinction used by theologians.¹² We will consider how Catherine connects Mary with the ob-

38/3 (1940): 8-9; Innocenzo Venchi, O.P., "La pietà Mariana di S. Caterina," *Nuovi Studi Cateriniani* (1984): 95-100.

⁸ Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., "La dottrina di Maria. Analisi mariologica della lett. 144 (XXXIV) dell'epistolario cateriniano," *Rassegna di ascetica e mistica, S. Caterina da Siena* 24/1 (1975): 29-41.

⁹ Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, "Spunti mariani nell'epistolario di Santa Caterina da Siena," *Maria, Caterina e Altri* (Roma: Centro Nazionale di Studi Cateriniani, 1989), 5-17; Giuliana Cavallini, "Maria nella prospettiva cateriniana," *Maria, Caterina e Altri*, 75-97; Alessandro Cortesi, O.P., "Maria poeta delle meraviglie di Dio in santa Caterina," *Maria, Caterina e Altri*, 99-121; Raimondo Spiazzi, O.P., "Da santa Caterina da Siena alla Theotokos sulla via in Nazaret," *Maria, Caterina e Altri*, 143-154.

¹⁰ Guglielmo Di Agresti, O.P., "Aspetti Mariano-Mariologici in S. Caterina da Siena," *Atti del Symposium Catharinianum nel V centenario della canonizzazione di Santa Caterina da Siena: Siena, 24-28 aprile 1962* (Siena: Accademia Senese degli Intronati, 1962): 220-243; Luis López de Las Heras, O.P., "La Imagen de María en Santa Catalina de Siena," *Studium* 13 (1973): 249-279.

¹¹ Gabriella Anodal, "La Passione de Maria," *L'Arbore della carità* 22/2 (1971): 18-20; Lina Grassotto, "La Madre del Redentore," *S. Caterina da Siena* 18/2 (1967): 6-13.

¹² "If we are objectively redeemed by Christ's sacrificial death, then the concrete form of our subjective redemption, and thus of every single case of subjective appropriation of objective

jective redemption, that is, Mary's role in Jesus' Incarnation and in His death. In this section, we will also discuss Catherine's position on the Immaculate Conception, although this does not bear directly on the central proposition of this chapter. Nevertheless, this best-known teaching of Catherine on Mary does illustrate the fourteenth-century Church's struggle to understand how the redemption affected Mary herself. The final section will explicate Catherine's understanding of Mary's role in the way that redemption is applied to believers.

The occasional nature of most of our sources, particularly Catherine's letters and prayers, does not allow us to reconstruct Catherine's complete understanding of Mary. Nevertheless, by reviewing all the extant references, we hope to decipher the key elements of her Marian teachings. We hope to demonstrate that, in a very distinctive way, Mary, in Catherine's writings, continually serves both the objective and subjective aspects of the mission of Christ crucified, which is the mystery that pervades all of Catherine's thought.

Mary in Catherine's Life

Catherine's thinking is always grounded in reflection on experience. Thus she asserts: "The soul acquires every virtue and grace in the knowledge of itself."¹³ Before examining Catherine's teachings on Mary, it would be helpful to explore Catherine's own experience of Mary. We will begin by identifying briefly particular Marian practices and beliefs which are adverted to in Catherine's writings or are identified with her in the first biographical writings. We will then review the incidents in which Mary is an active presence in Catherine's life.

Marian Devotions Evident in Catherine's Life

A number of references made by Catherine and her disciples testify to Marian devotional customs and to the theological assumptions about Mary that existed in the Tuscan city of Siena during a thirty-three year period (1347-1380). They illustrate attitudes towards Mary during this important time of cultural transition as Europe began to move from the Middle Ages into the early Renaissance. In addition to the specific historical data of the Marian customs of her time and milieu, the

redemption, is bound to correspond to the essential meaning and direction of the objective gift. Subjective redemption is the free acceptance, the personal appropriation, of the objective gift." Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*, trans. N. D. Smith (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1964), 72.

¹³ "Ogni virtù e grazia acquista l'anima nel cognoscimento di sè" (Letter 266, IV, 136). Noffke dates this letter between August 15 and September 15, 1378.

concepts underlying these practices provide us an indication of Catherine's fundamental attitudes towards Mary.

In many ways, Catherine imbibed the Marian attitudes of her family, her city, and of the local Church in Siena. The warmth and piety of her family life offered Catherine an environment in which her inclinations to devotion easily flourished. Raimondo recounts an example of Catherine's early Marian devotion: "And when she was about five years old, having been taught the Angelic greeting of the glorious Virgin, she repeated it frequently. And inspired by God, she began to genuflect on each stair, as she was going up and down, saluting the blessed Virgin at the same time, as she herself confessed when she discussed the matter with me in the secrecy of confession."¹⁴

Francesco Valli¹⁵ states that the practice of repeating the Hail Mary, sometimes with *laudi* (praises), and sometimes with genuflections, had become customary possibly by the end of the thirteenth century and certainly by the first half of the fourteenth century. These practices are documented in Siena, although they do not seem to have originated there.¹⁶

Caffarini indicates that this practice of genuflecting on the stairs in honor of Mary was not unique with Catherine but was a Siense devotion, related to the dedication of the city to Our Lady. Caffarini writes: "It is thought, moreover, that it [the practice of genuflecting while saying the Hail Mary] came from the devout greetings, which were the custom to observe in a place which was especially devoted to the Mother of God."¹⁷ In 1260, the city of Siena was dedicated to Mary, and the

¹⁴ "Cumque quinquennium peregisset vel circiter, edocta salutationem Angelicam Virginis gloriosae ipsam repetebat frequentius; et coelitus inspirata, coepit ascendendo seu descendendo per gradus, ad quemlibet gradum flexo geniculo, semel beatam Virginem salutare; prout ipsamet in secreto confessionis mihi, dum offerret se materia, est confessa." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, I, I, xxviii, 869. Tommaso Caffarini, in his *Legenda minor*, makes similar mention of this practice: "Indeed, in her fifth year, not only before the figure of the glorious virgin Mary, but even on the steps of the staircase, she uttered the 'Ave Maria,' going up and going down, bending her knee on each step." "Anno vero quinto etatis eius, non tantum ante figuram virginis gloriose Marie sed etiam in gradibus scalarum, tam ascendendo quam descendendo, 'Ave Maria' suo flexo geniculo gradu quolibet exprimebat." Thomas Antonii de Senis [Tommaso Nacci Caffarini], *Sanctae Catharinae Senensis legenda minor* (Recensio Vetus), I, ed. E. Franceschini, vol. X, *Fontes vitae S. Catharinae Senensis historici* (Milano: Bocca, 1942), 8,10.

¹⁵ Francesco Valli is one of the scholars who helped prepare the *Fontes vitae S. Catharinae Senensis historici*, the critical editions of documents related to Catherine.

¹⁶ Francesco Valli, "L'infanzia e la puerizia di S. Caterina da Siena: Esame critico delle fonti," *Studi Cateriniani* 7 (1930-31): 98.

¹⁷ "Existimatum autem est id evenisse ex devotis salutationibus, quas agere consueverat in tali loco veluti Dei genitricis devota precipua." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Legenda minor*, I, 10 (Recensio Vetus).

city added the words, *Civitas Virginis* to the official name of the city, *Sena Vetus*. Thus, Catherine, at an early age, appropriated the religious practices of her city.

In his work, *Libellus de Supplemento*, Caffarini mentions that one of Catherine's earliest mystical experiences related to Mary: "It must first be known that, when the virgin was a little girl about five years, she venerated the Virgin Mother of God and wherever she discovered her image, she said 'Ave Maria.' Once while saying that, she was lifted from the earth."¹⁸ While Catherine's spirituality necessarily underwent a development and evolution, such a phenomenon suggests that the seeds of the Marian devotion that marked her maturity were present in her youth.

Catherine's evangelizing spirit showed itself even in her childhood. Caffarini records that Catherine taught her small friends the prayers she had learned: "But also by word and by example she directed other girls to the same, teaching them affectionately the 'Hail Mary' and the 'Our Father.'"¹⁹ The fact that the children learn the "Hail Mary" as well as the "Our Father" attests to the popularity of this prayer, which, although found in the liturgy at an earlier date, does not seem to have been used as a devotion until the eleventh century.²⁰ Francesco Valli maintains that Catherine's "Hail Mary" would have ended with the words *ventris tui* ("your womb"), as even the addition of the name of Jesus to the two scriptural passages only became customary at a later time in Siena.²¹ In his preaching after Catherine's death, Caffarini uses Catherine's example to encourage the use of this prayer.²²

¹⁸ "Quantum ad primum sciendum quod, cum virgo esset parvula annum percurrrens quintum, venerabatur Virginem Dei Matrem et ubicumque eius ymaginem reperisset, dicebat 'Ave Maria' et, aliquando, dicendo illam, elevabatur a terra." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, I, i, 12. Both Caffarini and Raimondo refer to Catherine as "virgo." Whether their references are to Catherine or to Mary must be determined from the context.

¹⁹ "Sed etiam ad idem verbo et exemplo puellas alias inducebat illas affectuose docendo 'Ave Maria' 'Pater Noster.'" Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Legenda minor*, I, 10.

²⁰ The "Angelic salutation" prayed by Catherine consisted of the greeting of the Archangel Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1:28) and the greeting of Elizabeth to Mary (Luke 1:42). This combination of the two greetings is first found in some sixth-century Eastern liturgies. In the seventh century it was used in the Roman antiphony for the offertory of the feast of the Annunciation, Ember Wednesday of Advent, and the Fourth Sunday of Advent. Around 1198, it was authorized as a prayer to be taught with the Creed and the Pater Noster. The present second part of the Hail Mary, after a gradual evolution, was officially confirmed in the reform of the Breviary by Pius V in 1568.

²¹ Valli, "L'infanzia," 95.

²² In the *Processus*, Caffarini writes: "Just as our young virgin, in the beginning of her childhood, hastened to the Mother of Christ, expressly by the angelic salutations, so let us in this beginning hasten to the same Mother of God and let us likewise offer to her the angelic salutation, saying 'Ave.'" "Quemadmodum nostra novella virgo in principio sue pueritie, et signanter salutationibus angelicis, matri Christi occurrerit, ita et nos in hoc principio ipsi matri Dei occurramus eique salutationem angelicam pariter offeramus dicentes: Ave." *Processo Castellano*, 166. For another example of Caffarini's appeal to Catherine's example, see the Appendix, note 1. The Appendix will provide the

Catherine manifests an awareness of the special significance of the Marian feasts. One of her twenty-six prayers was given on the feast of the Annunciation, March 25, 1379, which was Catherine's thirty-second birthday. In this prayer, she asserts: "But today I ask boldly because it is the day of graces."²³ This particular prayer considers especially the Marian aspects of this feast. At the time when this prayer was given, Catherine was living in the vicinity of the Dominican Basilica, S. Maria sopra Minerva, dedicated to the Annunciation. She is buried under the altar of this basilica. We will examine this prayer more closely as we study Mary's cooperation in the Incarnation.

Another feast day that Catherine alludes to is that celebrated on February 2, which, according to the practice of the time emphasized Mary's purification. In her last letter to Raimondo, Catherine writes: "Then, the day of the Purification of Mary, I wished to hear Mass. Then, all the mysteries were renewed."²⁴ Quite frequently, the liturgical feasts were occasions of particular graces for Catherine. On this feast, which took place three months before her death, Catherine experienced a vivid perception of the great needs of the Church, especially in Rome, and of her call to intercede for the Church.

The anonymous author of the only biographical source written during Catherine's lifetime, *I Miracoli*, when describing Catherine's fasting, alludes to her efforts to make a special celebration of the feast of the Nativity of Our Lady: "She did not eat nor drink, except for the feast of Our Lady in September 1374. She said that she wished to make a Passover, and she only put some fruit into her mouth in a usual way, and took a sip of water; but then she did not eat or drink any more."²⁵

reader with supplementary texts which bear on the topics discussed in this chapter. An indication that the Hail Mary was well ensconced in Catholic practice during Catherine's lifetime may be seen in her letter to Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi in 1376 where she informs him that the recitation of Hail Marys along with Our Fathers are required to obtain a papal indulgence: "You know when I had the indulgence of fault and of suffering from the Holy Father, he imposed on me to say every Friday thirty-three Our Fathers and thirty-three Hail Marys and then seventy-two Hail Marys." "Sai, quando ebbi la indulgenza di colpa e di pena, del Santo Padre, m'impose ch'io dovessi dire ogni venerdì trenta e tre Pater nostri e trenta e tre Ave Marie, e poi settanta e due Ave Marie" (Letter 228, III, 306-307). Noffke indicates a date around February 25 to 28, 1376, for this letter.

²³ "Ma oggi io adimando arditamente perchè egli è il di delle gracie" (*Oratio* XI, 130).

²⁴ "Poi, il di della Purificazione di Maria, vuolsi udire la messa. Allora si rinfrascarono tutti i misteri" (Letter 373, V, 288). Noffke offers February 15, 1380, as the date of this letter.

²⁵ "Nè mangia nè beve, salvo che per in Donna di settembre, anno detto, disse che volea fare Pasqua, e quello di solo si mise alcune frutte in bocca al modo usato, e prese uno sorso d'acqua; ma poi non più nè mangia nè bee." Anonimo Fiorentino, *I Miracoli di Caterina di Iacopo da Siena*, ed. Francesco Valli, vol. IV of *Fontes S. Catharinae* (Siena: R. Università di Siena, Cattedra Cateriniana, 1936), 24.

Catherine considers this feast of Mary important enough to dispense with her daily fasting.

Although the Assumption was not officially defined by the Church in Catherine's time, it was celebrated liturgically. St. Thomas, while not elaborating on the doctrine, makes reference to it somewhat offhandedly in the *Summa Theologiae*, showing by way of reference to Pseudo-Augustine that there are truths, such as the Assumption of Mary's body into heaven, which are not found in the Scriptures.²⁶

The importance of this feast for Catherine can be seen from an incident reported by Caffarini. Being sick, she was unable to go to church on this feast. Nevertheless, she was, in some mystical way, conscious of the liturgy being celebrated in the "ecclesia maior." This church would be the Cathedral or *Duomo*, which had been dedicated to the Assumption when it was consecrated in 1179. Caffarini writes:

When, however, she was not able on certain days to go to church, she desired greatly to receive communion. One morning, while she was at the home of her companion, she saw the walls of the major church of Siena. She thanked God that He had made her worthy of this vision of which she did not judge herself worthy. When, however, she looked back at those walls, she heard there the singing of the preface of the Blessed Virgin. When, indeed, those words were said, 'And You, in the Assumption of the blessed Mary, ever virgin,' at once, rapt in spirit, she saw our most blessed Lady and she felt herself to be wholly bathed in divine fire. And Our Lady then began to speak to her the sweetest words other than those drawn up in scripture.²⁷

²⁶ "Sed sicut Augustinus rationabiliter argumentatur quod cum corpore sit assumpta in caelum, quod tamen Scriptura non tradit, ita etiam rationabiliter argumentari possumus quod fuerit sanctifica in utero." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 27, 1, vol. 51, trans. Thomas R. Heath, O.P. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969), 6. For the text of Pseudo-Augustine, see "De Assumptione Beatae Mariae Virginis"; PL 40, 1141-1148. Also, Thomas, in his *In Salutationem Angelicam Expositio*, states that Mary did not experience bodily corruption: "The Blessed Virgin was immune from this, because she was assumed with her body into heaven. For we believe that after death she was revived and carried into heaven." "Et ab hac immunis fuit Beata Virgo, quia cum corpore assumpta est in caelum. Credimus enim quod post mortem resuscitata fuerit, et portata in caelum." S. Thomas Aquinas, *In Salutationem Angelicam Expositio*, in *Opuscula Theologica*, II (Roma: Marietti, 1954), mcccxxxiii, 241.

²⁷ "Cum autem non potuisset aliquibus diebus venire ad ecclesiam et multum desideraret communicare, existens uno mane in domo cuiusdam socie sue vidit parietes ecclesie maioris de Senis et regratiabatur Deo quod saltem de hac visione fecisset eam dignam de qua se non esse dignam iudicabat. Cum autem sic respiceret parietes illos, audivit ibidem cantari prefationem de beata Virgine. Cum vero diceretur illud verbum 'et te in assumptione beate Marie semper virginis etc.' statim rapta in spiritu vidit beatissimam Dominam nostram et se ipsam sensit quodam divino igne totam perfundi. Et Domina tunc cepit ipsam alloqui dulcissimis verbis que redacta non fuerunt in scriptis." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, vi, 89.

Caffarini also records Catherine's reactions when her confessor asked her about Jesus' welcome of Mary into heaven upon her Assumption:

And she responded, saying that when the Virgin Mary died, Christ came to her and said to her, "Come, My chosen one! Come, My bride! And I will prepare a place for you"... And she considered with how much desire Mary cast herself into God so that about this the virgin wept while at the same time she laughed. This happened as she explained to her confessor on the feast of the Assumption of the blessed Mary and the confessor saw it in part.²⁸

Catherine is overwhelmed by Mary's total self-giving to God upon her reception into heaven. Catherine's thought quickly moves to the unitive aspect of the dogma.

Besides indicating the importance of the Marian feasts for Catherine, her writings also demonstrate particular Marian customs. One such practice which Catherine makes reference to is that of dedicating Saturday to Mary. The origin of this custom is unknown, although Alcuin (d. 804) includes two votive Masses for Our Lady on Saturday in his *Liber Sacramentorum*. The practice of fasting on Saturday came to be associated with Mary. The medieval collections of legends of Our Lady, known in German as *Marienlegenden*, did much to popularize the practice of honoring Mary on Saturdays.²⁹ Saturday, for Catherine, was "the day of Mary." Significantly, the original inspiration for *Il Dialogo* took place at Mass on Saturday. Catherine recounts this in the prologue to her book: "This day was the day of Mary."³⁰ She records this connection in her letter to Raimondo which details the origin of her book, informing him that the inspiration came to her when she went to Mass "on the day of Mary."³¹

Catherine considers Saturdays to be appropriate days for fasting. Trying to moderate the zeal of her friend, the tailor's wife in Florence, Monna Agnesa, Catherine advises: "And other times do not fast other than Saturday when you feel you are able. When this heat is passed, fast on the days of Holy Mary, if you are able,

²⁸ "Et illa sibi respondit dicens qualiter, cum Virgo Maria moreretur, Christus venit ad eam et dicebat sibi: 'Veni, electa mea! Veni, sponsa mea! Et ponam in te'.... Et considerabat cum quanto desiderio proiciebat se in Deum et de hoc ipsa virgo plorabat fortiter cum hoc simul ridebat. Hec prout confessori in die assumptionis beate Marie explicavit et confessor in parte vidit." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, iii, 47.

²⁹ See Donald Attwater, "Legends of Our Lady," in *A Dictionary of Mary* (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1956), 147.

³⁰ "El quale di era el di di Maria" (*Il Dialogo*, II, 5).

³¹ "Che era il di di Maria" (Letter 272, IV, 159). This letter to Raimondo was written between October 10, 1377, or shortly afterwards. For the fuller text see Appendix, note 2.

and no more."³² She counsels Ristoro Canigiani, another Florentine disciple: "And Saturday fast in reverence of Mary."³³

Catherine also directs Ristoro to an additional form of Marian devotion. Under the influence of Catherine, Ristoro had made serious attempts to change his life, even forgiving his enemies. To stabilize his spiritual growth, Catherine directs him to a more ordered prayer life by means of a Marian Office. The Marian Offices were modeled after the Divine Office. They can be found in the tenth century and seem to have undergone some formulation by St. Peter Damian and others in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.³⁴ The Dominican Friars recited the Marian Office daily in addition to the Divine Office. Catherine urges Ristoro to recite this Office: "And I beg you that, if you do not say it, that you say the office of the Virgin every day in order that she may be your refuge and advocate before God for you. To put your life in order, I beg you to do this."³⁵ Catherine believes that daily devotion to Mary will order Ristoro's life and that Mary will be his refuge and advocate.

Catherine's own awareness of Mary is evidenced by the Marian invocations in her writings, especially the formula, "In the name of Jesus Christ crucified and of gentle Mary,"³⁶ found in almost all of her writings. In a series of letters, written between the close of 1375 and mid-1376, she uses a variation on this invocation. This variation may be seen in her letter to the Florentine Cardinal at Avignon, Pietro Corsini, where she begins: "In the name of Jesus Christ crucified and of sweet Mary, mother of the Son of God."³⁷

She makes use of other variations on occasion. For instance, she opens her letter to a prostitute in Perugia with the words: "Gentle Jesus, Jesus love, Mary sweet

³² "E altro tempo non digiunare altro che 'l sabato, quando ti senti da potere. Quando questo caldo è passato, e tu digiuna le Sante Marie, se tu puoi; e più no" (Letter 174, III, 85). Noffke recommends a date between August 20 and 31, 1378, for this letter.

³³ "E il sabato digiunare a riverenza di Maria" (Letter 258, IV, 100). Noffke puts this letter between August 2 and 10, 1378, shortly before the preceding reference to fasting on Saturday, found in Letter 174.

³⁴ See Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., "The Marian Liturgical Tradition," in *The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary*, ed. H. George Anderson, J. Francis Stafford, Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992), 185.

³⁵ "E pregovi che, se voi nol dite, che voi il diciate ogni di l'oficio della Vergine, acciò che ella sia il vostro refrigerio, e avvocata dinanzi a Dio per voi. D'ordinare la vita vostra, di questo vi prego che il facciate" (Letter 258, IV, 99-100).

³⁶ "Al nome di Gesù Cristo crocifisso e di Maria dolce."

³⁷ "Al nome di Gesù Cristo crocifisso e di Maria dolce, madre del Figliuolo di Dio" (Letter 177). For this variant, see DT LXI, 251. Noffke situates this letter near Palm Sunday, April 6, 1376.

Mother."³⁸ Her letter to the Jewish man, Consiglio, begins: "Praised be Jesus Christ crucified, Son of the glorious virgin Mary."³⁹ By invoking Mary with Jesus as she begins her writing, Catherine is entrusting each instance of her communication to the blessing of Jesus and His mother.

Catherine used beads but not as part of a Marian devotion. Raimondo makes an allusion in his *Vita* to Catherine having a string of beads. Raimondo explains that the beads are called "Pater Nosters" because they were used to count the repetitions of the Lord's Prayer.⁴⁰ The use of beads in the repetition of prayers is one of the practices that contributed to the development of the Marian rosary.

Practices of devotion related to Mary such as the use of the Hail Mary, attention to Mary's feasts, remembrance of Mary on Saturdays, fasting in Mary's honor, praying the Marian office, and invoking Mary's help are, for Catherine, part of the ordinary life of the serious Christian. Devotion to Mary is intimately imbedded in Christian living. Catherine accepts, uses, and encourages the use of the Marian practices of her time.

Catherine's Personal Experience of Mary

For our accounts of Catherine's personal experiences of Mary, we will rely especially on incidents recorded by Catherine's early biographers. Two unstated convictions underlie these accounts. The first is that Mary is actively involved in Catherine's life. Catherine prays to Mary with confidence that Mary will help her. At times, Mary's help is experienced by a vision. The second conviction is that Mary's action draws Catherine to Jesus, and, on occasion, Mary brings Jesus to Catherine.

In recording an early incident in Catherine's life, Raimondo shows us the confidence that Catherine had that Mary would assist her in discerning her unique vocation. She was about seven years old when she determined to imitate Mary's virginal consecration, considering Mary to be the initiator and the model of consecrated virginity. Catherine relied upon Mary to support her in making this decision:

She thought therefore, and she knew through God's revelation, that the most sacred Mother of God was the first of those who came to the virginal life, and who vowed her virginity to God. So she began to have recourse to her about this. And when she

³⁸ "Gesù dolce, Gesù amore, Maria dolce madre" (Letter 276, IV, 186). This letter was written at the request of one of the woman's brothers. Noffke considers this letter to have been written between late January and early May 1376.

³⁹ "Laudato sia Gesù Cristo crocifisso, figliuolo de la gloriosa vergine Maria" (Letter 15, I, 49).

⁴⁰ "Pater Noster vulgariter appellantur eo quod ad ipsorum numerum oratio Dominica replicatur." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, II, II, cxxxiv, 895-896.

came to her seventh year, not as a seven-year-old but almost as a seventy-year-old, maturely and for a long time, she considered making this vow, praying continually to the same Queen of virgins and of angels, who mercifully was helping her, that she might deign to obtain from the Lord for the perfect direction of her spirit, by which help she might do that which was more pleasing to the Lord, and more efficacious for the salvation of her soul, always offering her desire before her, that she anxiously sought to lead a life both angelic and virginal.⁴¹

Catherine prays "continually" to Mary to help her to do what was "more pleasing to God." Catherine constantly renews her self-giving by "always offering her desire before her." Catherine entrusts her desires to Mary, confident that Mary will aid her to please God in the celibate vocation that she adopts in imitation of Mary.

The idea that Mary is the model of virgins is deeply rooted in the Patristic tradition. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 387), in his *Catechetical Lectures*, asserts that "The virgins have their portion with Mary the Virgin."⁴² Gregory of Nyssa (d. ca. 394) states that the physical presence of the Lord in Mary is also true in a spiritual way of all virgins.⁴³ Ambrose (d. 397) proposes Mary as the example for all who choose virginity.⁴⁴ Jerome (d. 419) depicts Mary as the "mother of many virgins."⁴⁵

In a later incident, Catherine returns to this idea of Mary as the example of those who choose the celibate life. Andrea, a cancer-stricken *Mantellata*, whom Catherine nursed, slandered Catherine apparently out of possessiveness for her attention. Catherine reminds God of the delicacy of a celibate's reputation, alluding to the care given to Mary: "Most powerful Lord and my most loving Spouse, You know the reputation of any virgin to be delicate and the modesty of Your spouses

⁴¹ "Cogitavit igitur, et Deo revelante cognovit, quod sacratissima Dei genitrix fuit prima, quae adinvenit vitam virgineam, et quae Deo suam vovit virginitatem. Unde coepit ad ipsam recursum habere super hoc: et dum septennium curreret, non quasi septennis, sed quasi septuagenaria, mature ac diu deliberavit super hujus voti emissionem; orans continue ipsam Reginam Virginum simul et Angelorum, quatenus eam misericorditer adjuvando, dignaretur sibi a Domino impetrare perfectam spiritus sui directionem, qua mediante faceret id quod gratius esset Domino, ac efficacius pro animae suae salute; proferens semper coram ea desiderium suum, quo anxie affectabat vitam ducere Angelicam simul et virginealem." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita*, I, III, xxxv, 871. Caffarini also gives an account of Catherine's appeal for Mary's help in choosing the virginal life. See Appendix, note 3.

⁴² Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, XIII, "De Christo Crucifixo et Sepulto," 34; PG 33, 768.

⁴³ Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity*, 2; PG 46, 324 B.

⁴⁴ "Haec est imago virginitatis. Talis enim fuit Maria, ut ejus unius vita omnium sit disciplina." Ambrose, *De Virginitate*, II, 15; PL 16, 210.

⁴⁵ "Et tamen haec virgo perpetua multarum est mater virginum." Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I, 31; PL 23, 254.

exceedingly susceptible to stain, so You wished Your glorious mother to have one considered a spouse."⁴⁶

After Giacomo, her father, had imposed heavy domestic obligations upon Catherine to break her resistance to a potential marriage, Catherine used her imagination to bolster her awareness of the presence of Jesus and Mary. Raimondo states: "She also said, at that time, she had imagined that her father represented our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, and her own mother represented His most glorious mother, Mary... because of this imagination she was joyful and served everyone in such a conscientious way that everyone marveled."⁴⁷ Catherine is convinced that Jesus and Mary want her to accept with joy the humiliating work imposed on her. She finds strength in visualizing Jesus and Mary, believing that as she serves her parents she is serving her Savior and His mother. Through her imagination she pictures the reality that she knows to be true by faith; in serving her neighbor she is serving Jesus (Mt. 25:45). Catherine extends this presence to include Mary being represented by her mother.

Catherine believes that Mary is not only present but is also able to intervene in situations. Thus, she gives Mary credit for obtaining a director for her. Catherine's confessors and her superiors among the *Mantellate* were, not surprisingly, often confounded by her unusual ways. The resulting misunderstandings were a source of great suffering to Catherine and she petitioned Mary for a guide who could comprehend her unique needs. Stefano Maconi, in his testimony for the *Processus*, states: "The most blessed virgin Mary, bodily appearing to this most holy virgin Catherine, promised to give her one most faithful and devoted to her as father and confessor, who would give her much more consolation than she had from her other confessors up to that point, and, afterwards, the results proved it."⁴⁸

Catherine was asked by the Dominicans to come to Florence on the occasion of the Dominican General Chapter in 1374.⁴⁹ While in Florence, Catherine attended a

⁴⁶ "Omnipotentissime Domine ac peramantissime Sponse mi, tu nostri teneram esse virginis cujuslibet famam, et pudorem sponsarum tuarum nimis periculose quamcumque recipere maculam: propter quod etiam voluisti, tuam gloriosissimam genitricem sponsum putativum habere." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita*, II, IV, clviii, 901.

⁴⁷ "Aiebat enim, firmiter se tunc imaginatam fuisse, quod pater suus repraesentaret Salvatorem nostrum Dominum Jesum Christum; mater vero sua, gloriosissimam genitricem ipsius Mariam... propter quam imaginationem tam laetanter et cum tanta diligentia omnibus serviebat, quod omnes admirabantur." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita*, I, II, I, 875.

⁴⁸ "Beatissima virgo Maria corporaliter apparens ipsi sanctissime virgini Catherine promisit ei dare unum fidelissimum devotum suum in patrem et confessorem, qui daret ei valde maiorem consolationem, quam hactenus habuerit a ceteris suis confessoribus, ut postea rei probavit eventus." "Testimony of Stephano Maconi," *Processus*, 272.

⁴⁹ *I Miracoli di Caterina di Iacopo da Siena* begins: "There came to Florence in the month of May in the year 1374, through the command of the Master of the Order, when there was a chapter of the

Mass at which Raimondo assisted and she intuited that he was the director whom she had petitioned from Mary. Shortly afterwards, the Dominicans resolved to provide supervision for this young *Mantellata*, whose way of life was stirring some discussion. The Master of the Order commissioned Raimondo to guide Catherine and assigned him to the priory at San Domenico in Siena, where he remained for the next five years. Caffarini, in his *Libellus de Supplemento*, testifies to Mary's role in the choice of Raimondo. He attributes this information to the notes of Catherine's original confessor, Frate Tommaso dalla Fonte. Caffarini states that this new director was "plainly Frater Raimondo da Capua, of his Order of Preachers, whom the Mother of God appearing once to the virgin had even promised her sometime before."⁵⁰

Catherine's letters have references to this incident. She alludes to Mary's involvement in this choice when writing to Raimondo in February 1376: "To you, most beloved and dearest father and son in Christ Jesus, given by that sweet mother Mary."⁵¹ The Master of the Order may have thought he was appointing someone to monitor Catherine, but Catherine experienced Raimondo to be not only a father, but an ally, a friend, and a disciple. Occasionally she even forgets the Master's original intention, as when she writes to Raimondo: "Oh my son, given by that sweet mother Mary."⁵²

In her last letter to Raimondo, she challenges him to struggle on behalf of the Church, appealing to the bond between them, initiated by Mary: "Now I beg and constrain you, father and son given to me by that sweet mother Mary...that you may cast yourself into this ship of the holy Church."⁵³ In this letter, written three

Friars Preachers, one clothed with the habit of St. Dominic who has the name, Catherine of Giacomo from Siena." "Venne a Firenze del mese di maggio anni MCCCLXXIV, quando fu il capitolo de' frati Predicatori, per comandamento del maestro dell'ordine, una vestita delle pinzochere di santo Domenico che à nome Caterina di Iacopo da Siena." Anonimo Fiorentino, *I Miracoli*, 1. The Master of the Order at the time of the General Chapter at Florence was Elias Raimondo of Toulouse. It is uncertain whether Catherine's situation was in fact a discussion of the chapter or was a concern that was attended to on the occasion of the chapter or after the chapter.

⁵⁰ "Videlicet cuidam fratri Raymundo da Capua euisdem ordinis Praedicatorun, quem etiam Dei Genitrix apparens semel virgini, eidem virgini promiserat per aliquod tempus ante." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, III, vi, 377.

⁵¹ "A voi, dilettissimo e carissimo padre e figliuolo in Cristo Gesù, dato da quella dolce madre Maria" (Letter 226, III, 294). Noffke locates this letter around February 17, 1376.

⁵² "Doimè, figliuolo dato da quella dolce madre Maria" (Letter 211, III, 223). Noffke offers late April 1376, as the time of this letter. Raimondo had gone before her to Avignon. Catherine did not reach Avignon until June 18, 1376, after spending most of May in Florence attempting to make peace between the city and the pope.

⁵³ "Ora prego e costringo voi, padre e figliuolo dato da quella dolce madre Maria...voi vi gittiate in questa navicella della santa Chiesa" (Letter 373, V, 290). For a fuller text of this passage, see Appendix, note 4.

months before she died, Mary's role in their relationship has retained its significance for Catherine.

Some of the incidents in Catherine's life that involve Mary are associated with unusual mystical experiences. Great mystics, such as John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, caution us that it is necessary to distinguish between the divine and the natural aspects of such occurrences, as even mystical experiences, such as visions and locutions, may be affected by natural influences or by the imagination.⁵⁴ Some of Catherine's experiences raise theological questions, such as Catherine's inspiration that Mary had original sin momentarily. We do well to remember that even the insights of the saints must be measured by the rule of faith preserved in the Church. What is clear is that Catherine's perceptions took on a sharpened clarity through her mystical experiences. Our purpose in examining Catherine's experiences will be to identify the essential truth about Mary that Catherine captured in a mystical way, without speculating on the nature of the visions or locutions.

I Miracoli recounts an experience of mystical espousal early in Catherine's life. According to the account, Catherine, as a young girl, had hidden herself in a secluded place outside of Siena:

Bowing to the earth and with a fervor of immense love she calls upon the mother of Christ, and with a girlish simplicity she asks that she may give her Son, Jesus, as her spouse. While praying, she felt herself being lifted from the earth somewhat into the air. And presently, the Virgin Mary appeared to her with her Son in her arms. He espoused the girl with a ring, and immediately disappeared and she was placed back, set on the ground, and returned to Siena and to her house.⁵⁵

Catherine believes that Mary is able to give Jesus to her as a spouse. In the apparition, Jesus is a child whom Mary literally brings to Catherine. Jesus espouses Himself to Catherine which implies that henceforth Catherine has a deeply personal and singularly loving relationship with Jesus.

Catherine had repeated encounters with Christ and with Mary during the three years in which she lived as a recluse. Raimondo relates: "Then the Lord appeared

⁵⁴ Cf. John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, II, 11, 5, in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1991), 181. Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, VI:9, 9, *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. II, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1980), 413.

⁵⁵ "[I]nginocchiosi in terra e con uno fervore di smisurato amore chiama la madre di Cristo, e con una puerile simplicità le chiede che ella le di a per suo sposo il suo figliuolo Gesù. E così orando si senti levare da terra alquanto in aria. E di presente l'apari la Vergine Maria col suo figliuolo in braccio, il quale con uno anello isposò la fanciulla, e subito spari, e ella si ritrovò riposta in terra e tornossi in Siena e a casa sua." Anonimo Fiorentino, *I Miracoli*, 4. For Raimondo's account of Catherine's actual vow, see Appendix, note 5.

to her most frequently, and remained alone with her longer. Sometimes He brought with Him His most glorious mother and sometimes blessed Dominic, and at times both."⁵⁶

Caffarini, in his testimony for the *Processus*, likewise indicates Mary's presence in the mystical events that took place at this time: "Since in such a degree and so effectively in the manner described, the virgin was united with God and the saints that nothing in any way separated her from such union during that time.... The virgin not only was caught up with God but also many times with the Mother of God and other saints and heavenly citizens."⁵⁷

During this period Catherine had an acute awareness of the presence of Mary and of the saints. Catherine, who was inspired by the legends of Mary Magdalene's thirty-three years of penitential life, had a particular attraction to this saint. Raimondo relates that the Lord and Mary gave Mary Magdalene to Catherine as a teacher and mother.⁵⁸

Raimondo states that Mary nursed Catherine: "Now, moreover, the glorious Mother appeared to her, and satisfied her with milk from her most sacred breasts and she filled her with ineffable sweetness."⁵⁹ Raimondo describes Catherine being fed by Mary's own body very simply, although contemporary readers might be startled by the image. The essence of the account is that Mary nurtures Catherine from her own substance, implying that there exists between them the very personal relationship of a mother and a child.

However, as a mother would also do, Mary corrects Catherine. On one occasion after Catherine was momentarily distracted during a vision of St. Dominic, the Blessed Virgin reprimanded her. Caffarini remarks: "Of this distraction, she said that the most gentle Virgin Mother Mary, reprehended her so harshly that she was scarcely able to bear the shame."⁶⁰ Mary wants Catherine to be totally focused on

⁵⁶ "Apparebat igitur ei frequentissime Dominus, et diutius solito cum ea manebat, ducebatque secum aliquando suam gloriossimam genitricem, aliquando beatum Dominicum, quandoque utrumque." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita*, I, XI, cxii, 890.

⁵⁷ "[Q]uod taliter et tam efficaciter modo prefato virgo uniebatur cum Deo et superis ut nichil pro illo tempore ipsam a tali unione fuit quomodolibet separata.... Virgo non solum cum Deo sed etiam multotiens cum Matre Dei et aliis sanctis et celestibus civibus rapta." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Processus*, 132.

⁵⁸ "Dominus ipse, ac eius Genitrix gloriosa.... Magdaleneam, huic virgini dederunt pro magister et mater" Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vitas*, III, lxiv, 878.

⁵⁹ "Nunc autem Genitrix gloriosa ipsam, ut appreat, lacte suorum sacratissimorum uberum satiabat, et ineffabili replebat dulcedine." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita*, II, cxcix, 911.

⁶⁰ "De qua adversione dicebat illam dulcissimam matrem Virginem, scilicet Mariam, tam aspere eam reprehendisse quod vix poterat tantam, verecundiam sustinere." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, ii, 41,42.

God. "The most gentle Virgin Mother" forcefully impresses upon Catherine the responsibility to be attentive to the special graces God is giving her.

A couple of Catherine's mystical experiences related to the Eucharist have Marian aspects. *Il Dialogo* recounts that, on one instance, while watching Mass being celebrated "at the altar of Mary," Catherine experienced the Trinity in the Eucharistic host.⁶¹ Catherine's indication at which altar this experience happened implies that there is a connection between the Eucharistic vision of the Trinity and the "altar of Mary." The Marian altar, representing Mary's close relationship with Christ's gift of Himself in the Eucharist, indicates Mary's relation to the involvement of the entire Trinity in the Eucharist.

On another occasion, the Eucharistic experience has a more specific relation to Mary. Mary sustains Catherine physically as she receives Jesus. Caffarini informs us that this happened while Catherine was at a Mass said by her confessor: "On a certain vigil of the Circumcision which was a Sunday... [Catherine] not being able to stand upon her feet, the blessed Virgin Mary held her hand upon her body, and held her by the hand until the Mass was finished. And then she herself received communion with such a sweetness the likes of which she was never able to express."⁶² Mary holds Catherine's weakened body with her hand, enabling her to participate at Mass and to receive communion. Catherine's reception of Jesus in communion on that occasion is so gratifying that Catherine cannot express it in words. Supported by Mary, Catherine receives Jesus.

Raimondo relates an incident in which Catherine is literally clothed with Christ by Mary. On this occasion, Catherine had been greatly disturbed by her attraction to a silk dress offered her by the devil. Catherine turned to prayer. Raimondo relates:

Her words completed, the Queen of virgins, the Mother of God, appeared to her. She seemed to her to be drawing a very beautiful garment from the side of her crucified Son, which she herself even adorned with bright and gleaming jewels. Then as she clothed her with the decorated garments, saying: "Be certain, daughter, that the garments that come from the side of my Son exceed all clothes in beauty and adornment."⁶³

⁶¹ "a l'altare di Maria" (*Il Dialogo*, CXI, 315).

⁶² "In quadam vigilia circumcisionis que fuit dominica.... Et stare non valens super pedes suos, beata Virgo Maria semper tenuit manum super corpus euis, et manu tenebat eam usque dum missa fuit complete. Et tunc ipsa comunicavit cum tanta dulcedine quod ipsam nullatenus poterat explicare." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, vi, 110-111.

⁶³ "Hoc sermone complete, apparuit ei Regina virginum Mater Dei, quae de latere Filii crucifixi pulcherrimam vestem trahere videbatur, quam ipsa etiam ornabat vernantibus et coruscantibus gemmis, et deinde virginem illa decora veste induit, dicens: Sciens scito, filia, quod vestes quae de latere Filii mei procedunt, omnes alias vestes excedunt in pulchritudine et decore." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita*, III, cdiii, 961. Caffarini, in the *Libellus de Supplemento*, gives the same

Catherine's experience of being clothed with garments from the side of Christ evokes Paul's words: "Every one of you who has been baptized has been clothed in Christ" (Gal. 3:27). While Paul is referring to baptism, Raimondo is recording a post-baptismal gift of grace given to Catherine. For Catherine, being clothed with Christ means that the individual has been deeply affected by the "fire and the gift of the blood."⁶⁴ Such clothing denotes a close bond with Christ which neither the devil's power or human powers can break.⁶⁵ To be clothed with Christ means to be as He was, "conformed with God," seeking what Christ sought and not the choices of the world.⁶⁶ For Catherine, this clothing implies a conformity with Christ's teaching such as characterized Paul, who was clothed with the "garment of Christ crucified, that is perseverance in His doctrine."⁶⁷

Catherine's use of the words "clothed with Christ" appear to be the same as being "clothed with the wedding garment." In fact in Letter 160, both expressions are found.⁶⁸ The wedding garment can refer to both the gift of grace and the re-

account of Mary's visit: "This said, soon the blessed Virgin appeared to her and showed her a very beautiful garment, that she had drawn from the wounded side of the crucified one. She [Mary] herself adorned this garment with golden ornaments and jewels. And she dressed her, saying: 'Be certain that no other garments exceed in beauty those which come forth from the side of my Son.'" "Hoc dicto, mox beata Virgo apparuit sibi et ostendit sibi vestem pulcherrimam que exhibat de latere vulneris crucifixi, quam etiam ipsa ornat aureis ornamentis atque gemmatis. Et tandem eam induebat dicens: 'Sciens scito quod omnes vestes alias excedunt in pulcritudine ille que emanaverunt de latere filii mei.'" Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, I, i, 13-14.

⁶⁴ "Cosi vi trovarete affogato e vestito di fuoco e del dono del sangue del Figliuolo di Dio" (Letter 146, II, 291).

⁶⁵ "Vestitevi, vestitevi di Cristo dolce Gesù, che è sì forte vestimento, che non dimonia nè creatura vel può tollere, se voi non volete" (Letter 5, I, 21).

⁶⁶ "Io Catarina, schiava de' servi di Gesù Cristo, scrivo a voi nel prezioso sangue suo con desiderio di vedervi spogliato il cuore, e l'affetto vostro del mondo e di voi medesima, perocchè in altro modo non vi potreste vestire di Cristo Gesù crocifisso; Perchè il mondo non ha conformità con Dio.... Egli cerca onore, stato e grandezza; e Dio benedetto le spregia, abbracciando le vergogne, scherni e villanie, fame, sete, freddo e caldo infino all'obbrobriosa morte della croce; e con essa morte rende onore al padre e noi fummo restituiti a Grazia. Egli cerca di piacere alle creature, non curandosi dispiacere al Creatore; e egli non cercò mai se non di compire l'obediencia del Padre eterno per la nostra salute. Egli abbracciò e vestissi della povertà volontaria; e 'l mondo cerca le grandi ricchezze" (Letter 111, II, 158-159).

⁶⁷ "[N]è per veruna cosa che gli adivenisse allentava il vestimento di Cristo crocifisso, cioè la perseveranzia nella dottrina sua" (*Il Dialogo*, LXXXIII, 217). In *Il Dialogo*, the Father speaks of those who are "clothed with the sweet garment of the Lamb, My only-begotten Son, that is, of His doctrine with burning charity." "...vestiti del vestimento dolce de l'Agnello unigenito mio Figliuolo, cioè della dottrina sua, con affocata carità" (*Il Dialogo*, C, 280).

⁶⁸ "Poichè Cristo è tuo vestimento ed ètisi dato in cibo.... Con amore e infiammato desiderio vi levate a strignere e vestirvi di questo dolce vestimento nuziale della divina e dolce carità" (Letter 160, III, 26-27).

sponse to grace. Similarly being "clothed with Christ" can refer to both aspects in Catherine's writings as it also does in the Pauline letters. St. Paul writes of being clothed in Christ in baptism (Gal. 3:27) but also instructs the Romans: "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14). At times Catherine is urging human diligence with regard to grace.⁶⁹ Stripping away selfish self-love enables believers to be "clothed with Christ crucified."⁷⁰ Thus, Catherine instructs her reader: "Strip yourself of the old man and clothe yourself in the new man, that is, of Christ crucified,"⁷¹ reminiscent of Ephesians 4:22, 24.

The instance where Catherine is clothed by Mary designates a particularly intensive gift of grace, received from the side of Christ, that is, as a result of His Passion. Of special interest is the fact that Mary clothes Catherine with this garment. Given Catherine's awareness of her attraction to the silk garments offered by the devil, Catherine's appreciation of the gift she experiences from the side of Christ is more intense. Mary is the instrument through which Catherine realizes Christ's redemptive powers, symbolized by the garments from Christ's side. With Mary's help, Christ has become her adornment.

Mary had a very significant role in the mystical espousal which came towards the close of the three years during which Catherine lived as a recluse. This took place on the last day of the Siena Carnival, Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, in 1368:

As she said that, there appeared the most glorious Virgin, His mother, the most blessed John the Evangelist, the glorious apostle Paul, and the most holy Dominic, father of her Order, and along with all these, the prophet David, having his harp in his hand. As the sweetest music was sounding, the Virgin Mother of God took the right hand of the virgin in her most sacred hand and, extending her fingers to the Son, she asked that He might deign to espouse Himself to her in faith. The Only Begotten of God most graciously assenting, He brought forth a gold ring, having around its circle four pearls and the most beautiful diamond enclosed in its center. Then, placing His most holy right hand on the ring finger of the right hand of the virgin, He said, "Behold, I espouse you to Me, your creator and savior in faith."⁷²

⁶⁹ "[O]ra di nuovo cominciate a spogliarvi di voi e vestirvi di Cristo crocifisso" (Letter 96, II, 109).

⁷⁰ "Scrivo a voi...con desiderio di vedervi spogliato di voi pienamente, acciocchè perfettamente vi troviate vestito di Cristo crocifisso" (Letter 98, II, 113).

⁷¹ "Spogliatevi dell'uomo vecchio, e vestitevi dell'uomo nuovo, cioè di Cristo crocifisso" (Letter 160, III, 26).

⁷² "Adhuc eo loquente, apparuerunt Virgo gloriosissima mater ejus, beatissimus Joannes Evangelista, gloriosus Apostolus Paulus, sanctissimusque Dominicus Pater suae religionis, ac cum his omnibus David propheta, psalterium musicum habens in manu sua. Quo supersuavissime ac sonore pulsante Virgo Dei genitrix, virginis dexteram sacratissima tua coepit manu, digitosque illius extendens ad Filium, postulabat ut eam sibi desponsare dignaretur in fide. Quod Dei unigenitus gratissime annuens, anulum protulit aureum, habentem in circulo suo quatuor margaritas, ac adamantinam gemmam superpulcherrimam, etiam sua summitate inclusam. Quem digito annulari

In the vision, Catherine is surrounded by three favorite saints, John, Paul, and Dominic. It is Mary who extends the fingers of Catherine's hand and asks Jesus to espouse her. Mary brings Catherine to Jesus and solicits Jesus' assent to the espousal. Mary is the officiating person at the union of Catherine and her Son in a relationship of intimacy comparable to marriage.

On other occasions, Mary also gives Jesus to Catherine literally. Christmas was one of these occasions. Caffarini reports in the *Libellus de Supplemento*:

On a certain night of the Nativity of Christ, as she contemplated when the blessed Virgin gave birth to the Savior, she perceived such sweetness that she was not able to speak, so much so that she did not have strength to say the office. Afterwards, she asked the blessed Virgin if she might hold her little son. Responding "willingly," she gave Him to her, and she herself received Him in her arms and for a long time held Him with immense delight. After she had come to that good which was so great, she was not able to speak, except that she said it was full of all goods. And that night with great consolation she told one of the companions with her, that she received and receives so many and such great consolations through the Virgin, that she never wished to be separated from her, since receiving her habit, that is of that Order of which the virgin herself was.⁷³

In this account, Mary literally puts Jesus in Catherine's arms and lets her hold Him for a long time. After the experience of receiving Jesus from Mary, Catherine confesses that since her vesting with Mary's habit in the Dominican Order, she had never wanted to be separated from Mary because of all the consolations she had received through her relationship with her.

In the *Libellus de Supplemento*, Caffarini gives an account of another Christmas vision:

On a certain night of the Nativity of the Lord, the virgin came to the church with great devotion, and set herself in the sacristy near the altar and saw that when the Blessed Virgin gave birth to Him, He was the fullness of eternal life for you [her]. And the Blessed Virgin gave her Son to her and she received Him in her arms and

dexteræ virginis, dextera sua supersacra imponens; Ecce, inquit, desponso te mihi creatori et salvatori tuo in fide." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, I, cxv, 890-1.

⁷³ "In quadam nocte nativitatis Christi, cum contemplaretur quando beata Virgo peperit Salvatorem, tantam percepit dulcedinem quod loqui non poterat, in tantum quod dicere non valebat officium. Postea rogavit beatam Virginem ut sibi compretaret aliquantulum filium suum, que 'libenter' respondens donavit sibi. Et ipsa in brachiis suis illum suscepit et per magnum spatium tenuit cum delectatione immensa. Postea venit ad aliud bonum ita magnum quod enarrare non poterat, nisi quod omnium bonorum se plenam esse dicebat. Et illa nocte communicavit et una eius socia cum ipsa cum magna consolatione, que tot et tantas consolationes receperat et recepit per virginem, quod numquam ab ipsa se separare volebat, recipiens tandem habitum suum, id est illius ordinis de quo erat ipsa virgo." Thomas Antonii de Senis, [Tommaso Nacci Caffarini], *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, vi, 80.

placed her face over the face of the boy, as sometimes a mother does to her son. And she said that the baby had in His chest the form of a cross.⁷⁴

Again, Mary gives the newly born Jesus to Catherine. These two visions of Mary giving her child to Catherine took place at Christmas, the celebration of the occasion in which Mary physically gave Jesus to humanity. As Catherine holds the child, she realizes that the infant has a cross in His chest, symbolizing Jesus' orientation to give His life on the cross even from the beginning. An incident that occurred immediately after Catherine's death illustrates the association that Catherine's disciples made between Mary and Catherine. According to Raimondo, Semia, one of the people in Rome who had been attracted to Catherine, went to sleep without realizing that Catherine died. She had a dream in which she saw Mary welcoming Catherine into heaven with extended arms. As Mary lifted Catherine, she gave her the kiss of peace, calling her "my most beloved daughter."⁷⁵ The fact that Raimondo records Semia's dream at length, in the section following Catherine's death in his biography, demonstrates that Catherine's disciples considered the dream to be an appropriate interpretation of Catherine's entrance into heaven, in which Catherine is recognized as Mary's "most beloved daughter."

In these instances from Catherine's life, it is clear that Mary deepens Catherine's relationship with Jesus. Early in her life, Catherine finds support for her unique vocation in Mary, to whom she turns in continuous prayer. Catherine believes that Mary provided her a director who was also her friend and her disciple. Catherine mystically experiences Mary nurturing her and chiding her to be more responsive to the special graces she receives. Catherine understands Mary to be clothing her with Jesus when Catherine is shaken by her attraction to fine clothing. Catherine perceives that Mary espouses her to Jesus, physically supporting her in her receiving communion, and mystically placing the child Jesus in her arms. Mary supports Catherine in following Jesus and both brings Catherine to Jesus and Jesus to Catherine. From the framework of her own Marian experiences, Catherine develops convictions about Mary that she will give to others through her writing, teaching, and preaching.

⁷⁴ "Quadam nocte dominice nativitatis virgo venit ad ecclesiam cum magna devotione, et posuit se in loco vestitarium prope altare et vidit quod quando beata Virgo peperit filium suum erat tibi tota vita eterna, et dedit sibi beata Virgo filium suum et accepit eum in brachiis suis et ponebat faciem suam super faciem pueri, sicut consuevit aliquando mater facere filio suo, et dixit quod puer habebat in pectore ad modum unius crucis." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, vi, 110-111. (Although awkward "tibi" is correct, possibly addressed to the reader.)

⁷⁵ "Domina coelorum obviis manibus suscipiens: Bene, inquit venerit dilectissima filia mea Catharina: et elevans eam, recepit eam ad osculum pacis." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita*, cclxxiii, 955.

Mary's Cooperation with Jesus' Salvific Actions in the Thought of Catherine of Siena

Just as the redemption has a primary importance in Catherine's thought, so Mary's relationship to Christ's Incarnation, Passion, and Death is central to Catherine's teachings on Mary. This second section of this chapter concerns Catherine's thought on Mary's role in the objective redemption at the Incarnation and at the death of Jesus. A discussion of Catherine's views on the Immaculate Conception is also included in this section.

The Incarnation: The Eternal Word Given to Us through the Hands of Mary

For Catherine, Jesus is "this gentle Son of Mary, the only begotten Son of God."⁷⁶ Jesus is the Son of God but He is also the Son of Mary and Mary's cooperation in the Incarnation is essential to the work of salvation. Catherine asserts: "The Eternal Word was given to us through the hands of Mary. And He was clothed with our nature with the substance of Mary."⁷⁷

For Catherine, to speak of Jesus' Incarnation and birth is to speak of Mary. Thus, in recapitulating the essential elements of the story of redemption, Catherine stresses Jesus' birth from Mary: "He has given us the Word, His only begotten Son, Who was born in the sweet womb of Mary and died on the wood of the most holy cross to take away death from us and to give us the life of grace."⁷⁸ Catherine presents His birth from Mary and His death on the cross as the two hinge moments of Jesus' life.

When Catherine summarizes the events of salvation for the Jewish man, Consiglio, she likewise names Jesus' birth from Mary as well as His death on the cross: "Our God is so sweet and kind that, after the law of love came, and the Son of God came in the Virgin Mary and shed an abundance of blood on the wood of the most holy cross, we are able to receive an abundance of divine mercy."⁷⁹ This concise statement suggests the crisp description of Jesus' life of the Apostles Creed: "born

⁷⁶ "Questo dolce Figliuolo di Maria, unigenito Figliuolo di Dio" (Letter 183, III, 112). This letter was written to Iacopo da Itti, Archbishop of Otranto. Noffke considers that this letter may have been written in January 1376.

⁷⁷ "Dato è a noi el Verbo eterno per le mani di Maria; e della substancia di Maria si vesti della natura nostra" (*Oratio XVI*, 190).

⁷⁸ "Egli ci ha dato il Verbo dell'unigenito suo Figliuolo nato nel ventre dolce di Maria e morto in sul legno della santissima croce per tollerci la morte e darci la vita della Grazia" (Letter 110, II, 156). This letter was sent to Monna Stricca di Cione Salimbeni.

⁷⁹ "Egli è tanto dolce e benigno lo Dio nostro che, poi che venne la legge dell'amore, che 'l Figliuolo di Dio venne ne la vergine Maria e sparse l'abbondantia del sangue in sul legno de la santissima croce, possiamo ricevere l'abbondantia de la divina misericordia" (Letter 15, I, 50).

of the Virgin Mary, He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried."

Catherine attributes Jesus' humanity to Mary. Jesus possesses "humanity drawn from the sweet womb of Mary."⁸⁰ According to Catherine, Jesus' Incarnation in Mary and His coming to birth in Mary are the first stages in His work of redemption. Mary is the one who brings Jesus to humanity: "She was that sweet mother who gave Him to us."⁸¹ Jesus did not come through Mary as a passive channel. According to Catherine, Mary was an active participant in Jesus' coming. Mary, by her willing cooperation, "gave" Jesus to humanity. Catherine exclaims: "O blessed and gentle Mary, you have given us the flower of the gentle Jesus."⁸²

Mary's active cooperation can be seen in Catherine's depiction of Mary in her prayer on the Annunciation. This prayer is her longest writing on Mary. In this prayer, Catherine observes the mystery of the Incarnation from the vantage point of Mary. She begins her meditation by questioning Mary's hesitant response to the angel:

Then, what did you wonder? At the great goodness of God which you saw, and considering yourself, how unworthy you knew yourself to be of such a great grace you were astonished. Then, in the consideration of your unworthiness and your weakness, and of the ineffable grace of God you became amazed and astonished. So, asking with prudence, you showed your profound humility, and as was said, you had not fear but wonder at the boundless goodness and charity of God, for the lowliness and smallness of your virtue.⁸³

Mary is hesitant because she is overwhelmed by the goodness of God and by her own frailty. Catherine's reflections are similar to those of Thomas, who perceives Mary's hesitation to be amazement at the honor bestowed upon her.⁸⁴ Catherine's

⁸⁰ "Umanità tratta del ventre dolce di Maria" (Letter 134, II, 254). Noffke places this letter between late January and early May 1376. This letter was sent to two hermits from the Camposanto, Bartolomeo and Giacomo.

⁸¹ "Ella fu quella dolce Madre che il donò a noi" (Letter 38, I, 153). This letter was sent to Monna Agnese.

⁸² "O beata e dolce Maria, tu ci hai donato il fiore del dolce Gesù" (Letter 342, V, 138). This letter was sent to Don Roberto da Napoli.

⁸³ "Adunque, di che ti maravigli? Della grande bontà di Dio la quale tu vedevi; e considerando te medesima, quanto tu ti cognoscevi indegna a tanta grazia eri stupefatta; dunque nella considerazione della indegnità e infermità tua e della ineffabile grazia di Dio diventasti ammirata e stupefatta. Così adimandando tu con prudenzia dimostri la profonda umiltà tua; e, come detto è, non avesti timore, ma ammirazione della smisurata bontà e carità di Dio per la bassezza e piccolezza della virtù tua" (*Oratio* XI, 120-122). For the fuller text on Mary's hesitation, see Appendix, note 6.

⁸⁴ "Nothing is more amazing to the humble than the sound of his own excellence. The amazement, however, causes the greatest attention of the soul. And so, the angel, wishing to move the mind of the Virgin to attend to the sound of these mysteries, began with her praise." "Animo humili nihil est

meditation in the form of a question to Mary may have been suggested to her by St. Bernard's homily on the Virgin's hesitation:

Why do you delay? Why do you fear? Believe, confess, and accept. Let humility take up boldness, modesty take up confidence. Now is not the time for virginal simplicity to forget prudence. In this one thing do not fear presumption, prudent Virgin. For, although silent modesty is gracious, now the word of piety is more necessary. Open, blessed Virgin, your heart to faith, your lips to confess, your womb to the Creator. Behold the desired of all the nations knocks outside at your door. O, if He would pass by because of your delay, and again in sorrow you begin to seek Him whom your soul loves! Rise, run, open. Rise through faith, run through devotion, open through confession.⁸⁵

Catherine perceives the Incarnation as a marriage. It is the marriage of God with humanity, and Mary is the necessary means of this marriage:

When it was time and the fullness of the holy time came, which appears to be the acceptable time, when my soul knows that it has been announced in your light, then when the great doctor came into the world, that is Your only-begotten Son, when the bridegroom united Himself to the bride, that is, the divinity of the Word to our humanity, Mary was the means of that union, who clothed You, the eternal bridegroom, with her humanity.⁸⁶

Mary was the means to the marriage of Jesus with humanity. Catherine's thought resonates with Thomas's depiction of Mary as the representative of humanity in the spiritual marriage taking place at the Incarnation: "In order that it might be shown that there was a certain spiritual marriage between the Son of God and

mirabilis quam auditus suae excellentiae. Admiratio autem maxime attentionem animi facit. Et ideo Angelus, volens mentem Virginis attentam reddere ad auditum tanti mysterii, ab eius laude incoepit" (*Summa Theologiae*, III, 30, 4 ad 1). Thomas views Mary's reaction as wonder and not unbelief: "Such doubt is more wonder than unbelief. And so the angel brought proof, not to clear her unbelief but to remove her wonder." "Talis dubitatio magis est admirationis quam incredulitatis. Et ideo Angelus probationem inducit, non ad auferendam infidelitatem sed ad removendam eius admirationem" (*Summa Theologiae*, III, 30, 4, ad 2).

⁸⁵ "Quid tardas? Quid trepidas? Crede, confitere, et suscipe. Sumat humilitas audaciam, verecundia fiduciam. Nullatenus convenit nunc ut virginalis simplicias obliviscator prudentiam. In hac sola re ne timeas, prudens Virgo, praesumptionem; quia, etsi gratia in silentio verecundia, magis tamen nunc in verbo pietas necessaria. Aperi, Virgo beata, cor fidei, labia confessoni, viscera Creatori. Ecce desideratus cunctis gentibus foris pulsat ad ostium. O si te morante pertransierit, et rursus incipias dolens quaerere quem diligit anima tua! Surge, curre, aperi. Surge per fidem, curre per devotionem, aperi per confessionem." S. Bernard, "Super Missus Est Homiliae," IV; PL 183, 84.

⁸⁶ "Quando fu tempo e venne la pienza del tempo sacro, il quale pare tempo accettabile quando l'anima mia cognosca essere annunziato in el tuo lume; allora quando venne il gran medico nel mondo, ciò è il tuo Figliuolo unigenito; quando lo sposo si uni alla sposa, ciò è la divinità in el Verbo alla umanità nostra, della quale unione fu mezzo Maria, la quale vesti te sposo eterno della sua umanità" (*Oratio* XII, 138-140).

human nature, therefore, through the Annunciation, the consent of the Virgin was sought in the place of the whole human race."⁸⁷

Catherine depicts Mary's involvement in a slightly different sense than Thomas, in that Mary gives Jesus humanity in order that He may enter into His marriage. Augustine describes Mary's womb as the place where human nature was wedded with divinity: "From heaven He came down to us, entering first the Virgin's womb, where humanity, our mortal flesh, was wedded to Him so that it might not be forever mortal."⁸⁸

According to Catherine, Mary, in bearing Jesus, not only manifests the dignity of humanity, but she also becomes an icon of the Trinity. Thus Catherine prays:

You, O Mary, are made a book in which today is written our rule. In you, today, is written the wisdom of the eternal Father. In you is manifest today the strength and freedom of humanity. I say that it shows the human dignity because if I look at you, Mary, I see that the hand of the Holy Spirit has written in you the Trinity, forming in you, the Word Incarnate, the only-begotten Son of God. He wrote for us, the wisdom of the Father, who is the Word. He has written for us the power because He was powerful to do this mystery. And He has written the clemency of the Holy Spirit for us, because only for grace and divine mercy, He has ordained and fulfilled such a mystery.⁸⁹

Catherine's comparison of Mary to a book is similar to the comparison to a book that Catherine also applies to the body of the crucified Jesus.⁹⁰ The editors of *Testi mariani del primo Millennio* note that the symbolism of a book, drawn from Isaiah, is often attributed to Mary in the Byzantine Liturgy in which she is called a book upon which the finger of the Father has written the body of the Word Incarnate.⁹¹ A number of Eastern Fathers use this symbol.⁹²

⁸⁷ "Ut ostenderetur esse quoddam spirituale matrimonium inter Filium Dei et humanam naturam. Et ideo per annuntiationem expetebatur consensus Virginis loco totius humanae naturae" (*Summa Theologiae*, III, 30, 1).

⁸⁸ St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1961), IV, xii, 82.

⁸⁹ "Tu, o Maria, se' fatta libro nel quale oggi è scritta la regola nostra. In te oggi è scritta la sapienza del Padre eterno, in te si manifesta oggi la fortezza e libertà de l'uomo. Dico che si mostra la dignità de l'uomo però che se io rguardo in te, Maria, veggo che la mano dello Spirito santo ha scritta in te la Trinità, formando in te el Verbo incarnato, unigenito Figliuolo di Dio: scripseci la sapiencia del Padre, ciò è esso Verbo; haaci scritto la potencia, però che fu potente a fare questo grande misterio; e hacci scritto la clemencia d'esso Spirito santo, ché solo per grazia e clemencia divina fu ordinato e compito tanto misterio" (*Oratio* XI, 122).

⁹⁰ See Letter 316, V, 39.

⁹¹ Georges Gharib, Ermanno M. Toniolo, Luigi Gambero, Gerardo Di Nola, *Padri e altri autori greci*, vol. I, *Testi mariani del primo Millennio* (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1988), 385, n. 19.

⁹² St. Epiphanius (d. 403) speaks of Mary as the "new and great volume" on which the Spirit inscribed the Word. Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses*, I, 2, XXXI; PG 41, 460. St. Maximus the Confessor (d. 662) describes Mary as "the sealed book on which is written the Word that is not able to

Catherine affirms that the purpose of this mystery is "only for grace and divine mercy," that is, for the salvation of humanity. The Annunciation manifests human dignity because God has become one with humanity. The dignity of humanity is also manifest because of the respect for Mary's will that God shows at the Annunciation.

In another cogent passage of the prayer, Catherine affirms Mary's freedom in accepting the request of God:

O Mary, the eternal Godhead knocked at your door, but if you had not opened the door of your will, God would not be incarnate in you. Blush, my soul, seeing that today, God has become a relative with you in Mary. Today He has shown you that although He made you without you, you will not be saved without yourself. So, as I said today, God knocks at the door of the will and waits that she may open to him.⁹³

God knocking at the door recalls Jesus' words in the Book of Revelation, "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if anyone hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come into him, and sup with him and he with Me" (Rev. 3:20). Catherine's emphasis on the freedom of Mary's acceptance accords with Thomas's stress on the free nature of her response: "In order that she might offer the free gift of her obedience, she presented herself as disposed, saying, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord.'"⁹⁴ Catherine uses especially powerful expressions in this passage, as she moves to the heart of the mystery: "Today, God has become a relative with you in Mary." God has not just visited humanity. God has chosen to be bonded to humanity, becoming a "relative" through Mary.

Since the Incarnation eludes explanation, Catherine particularly relies upon images to describe the mystery. The simplicity of her images gives a certain stark lucidity. One unusual image is the comparison of Mary's flesh to flour⁹⁵: "O Mary,

be written." "le livre scellé que tous les livres enseignent, sur lequel est écrit la parole qu' on ne peut écrire." *Vie de la Vierge*, II, 13, in CSCO, 479, 10. For an extensive discussion of Mary as a book, see Alessandro M. Cortesi, O.P., "Maria, poeta della meraviglie di Dio in S. Caterina," in *Maria, Caterina e Altri* (Roma: Centro Nazionale di Studi Cateriniani, 1989), 99-122.

⁹³ "Picchiava, o Maria, a la porta tua la deità eterna, ma se tu non avessi aperto l'uscio della volontà tua non sarebbe Dio incarnato in te. Vergognati, anima mia, vedendo che Dio oggi ha fatto parentado con teo in Maria. Oggi t'è mostrato che benché tu sia fatta senza te non sarai salvata senza te, unde, come detto è, oggi bussa Dio a la porta della volontà e aspetta che ella gli apra" (*Oratio XI*, 128). For a more complete text on God's respect for Mary's will, see Appendix, note 7.

⁹⁴ "Ut voluntaria sui obsequii munera Deo offeret: ad quod se promptam obtulit, dicens, 'Ecce ancilla Domini'" (*Summa Theologiae*, III, 30, 1).

⁹⁵ Jacobus de Voragine compares Mary to an urn full with flour, referring to her singular purity: "Ista hydria plena farina fuit Maria omni munditia et omni puritate plena." Jacobus de Voragine, *Mariale Aureum*, vol. II of *Sermones Aurei Jacobi de Voragine* (Tolosa: Orphanarum Sancti Joseph a Bono Auxilio, 1876), 190-191.

blessed are you among all the women of the ages, for today, you have given us of your flour. Today, the Godhead is united and kneaded with our humanity so strongly that this union is unable ever to be separated either through death or through our ingratitude."⁹⁶

Catherine's readers would have frequently observed the kneading of flour and water and known that once the water and flour have been kneaded together, separation of the two elements would not be possible. The union accomplished in Mary is not a transitory exchange between God and humanity but a permanent union of the Son of God with human nature.

Another image that Catherine uses is that of the tablet: "O Mary, my sweetest love! In you is written the Word from whom we have the teaching of life. You are the tablet which offers us that teaching."⁹⁷ According to Catherine, Jesus is written in Mary. Just as Moses had written the old law on tablets, so the new law is written in Mary.

In one sense, this writing is Jesus' physical presence in her womb. Mary is the new tablet because she has within her the new law, Jesus Himself. In another sense, Mary epitomizes the person who has spiritually taken Jesus within herself or himself. She, as the disciple who lives the new law, becomes the living example of her Son's teaching. Paul writes to his disciples in Corinth, "You are a letter of Christ... written not by ink but by the Spirit of the living God not in tablets of stone but in the tablets of the hearts of flesh" (2 Cor. 3:3). These words would certainly be applicable to the first person who responded to the coming of the new law, which she welcomed with the words: "Be it done to me according to Your will" (Lk 1:37).

Catherine frequently revisits and refashions her images so that they evolve in unexpected ways. For instance, in *Oratio XI*, she uses the analogy of soil to explain the Incarnation: "O Mary, today your soil has sprouted a Savior to us."⁹⁸ The idea of soil yielding a Savior may have been suggested to Catherine by the Vulgate passage of Isaias 45:8, which was used in the liturgy for the Wednesday in the third week of Advent: "Drop down dew, you heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down the just one, let the earth open up and bud forth a Savior."⁹⁹ The correspondence between Mary's fruitfulness and that of the earth appears often in the tradi-

⁹⁶ "O Maria, benedetta sia tu tra tutte le femine in seculum seculi, ch  oggi tu ci hai dato della farina tua. Oggi la deit    unita ed impastata con l'umanit  nostra si fortemente che mai non si pot  separare, n  per morte n  per nostra ingratitude" (*Oratio XI*, 132). For additional texts related to the union of the two natures, see Appendix, note 8.

⁹⁷ "O Maria, dolcissimo amore mio, in te   scritto el Verbo dal quale noi aviamo la dottrina della vita; tu se' la tavola che ci porgi quella dottrina" (*Oratio XI*, 128).

⁹⁸ "O Maria, oggi la terra tua ha germinato a noi el Salvatore" (*Oratio XI*, 130).

⁹⁹ "Rorate caeli, desuper, et nubes pluant justum; aperiatur terra et germinet Salvatorem" (Is. 45: 8).

tion, being used, for instance, by Jerome,¹⁰⁰ Andrew of Crete,¹⁰¹ and Theodore the Studite.¹⁰²

As Catherine continues the prayer, Mary is not only the soil but also is the plant: "You are the soil and you are the plant."¹⁰³ Later in the prayer, Mary is seen as the fruit-bearing soil and the plant which gives forth the flower. She prays: "Mary, fruit-bearing earth! You, Mary, are that new plant from whom we have the fragrant flower of the Word, the only-begotten Son of God. For in you, fruit-bearing earth, was sown this Word."¹⁰⁴

Almost identical to the image of soil is the image of a field, which suggests soil suited for a plant's growth. Bursting into prayer in the course of a letter, she addresses Jesus: "O fire, o abyss of charity, that we not be separated from You, You have wished to make a grafting of Yourself in me, and this was when You sowed Your word in the field of Mary."¹⁰⁵ In another letter, Jesus is described as "that seed sown in the sweet field of Mary!"¹⁰⁶ Catherine may have been aware that Bernard also compares Mary to a field: "For the field gives flowers without any human help, not sowed by someone, not dug up with a hoe, nor fertilized...so the womb of Mary flowered."¹⁰⁷ Jacobus de Voragine also uses the image: "Because she is the field of God, therefore she brought forth as her Son such a pleasant flower."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁰ Jerome depicts Mary as the restored land promised to David: "Holy Mary, the mother of the Savior, is the land of David." Jerome, "Tractatus De Psalmo XCVI," 96, 1; CCL 78, 440.

¹⁰¹ Andrew of Crete (d. 740) writes: "Now the immaculate earth gives in seed the divine grain and produces the ear from which will germinate the bread of life, Christ God." "Canone della Festa dell'Annunciazione," in *Testi mariani del primo Millennio* a cura di Georges Gharib, Ermanno M. Toniolo, Luigi Gambero, Gerardo Di Nola, vol. II (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1989), 477.

¹⁰² Theodore the Studite (d. 826), in a homily on Mary's nativity, compares the cursed thorns of sin that the earth produced to the fruit that came from the blessed earth of Mary. "Homilia II in Nativitatem B. V. Mariae"; PG 96, 686. Migne attributed this work to St. John Damascene.

¹⁰³ "Tu se' la terra e se' la piñata" (*Oratio XI*, 118).

¹⁰⁴ "Maria terra fruttifera. Tu, Maria, se' quella pianta novella della quale aviamo el fiore odorifero del Verbo unigenito Figliuolo di Dio, però che in te, terra fruttifera, fu seminato questo Verbo" (*Oratio XI*, 118).

¹⁰⁵ "O fuoco, o abisso di carità, perchè non siamo separati da te, ài voluto fare uno inesto di te in me, e questo fu quando seminasti la parola tua nel campo di Maria" (Letter 77, II, 24). Noffke sets this letter between late March and early April 1376. This letter was sent to William Flete.

¹⁰⁶ "Quello seme seminato nel campo dolce di Maria!" (Letter 138, II, 266). Noffke places this letter in late June 1375. This letter was sent to Giovanna d'Angiò, the Queen of Naples.

¹⁰⁷ "Campus enim sine omni humano floret adminiculo, non seminatus ab aliquo, non defossus sarculo, non impinguatus fimo...sic Virginis alvus floruit." S. Bernard, "In Adventu Domini," Sermo II; PL 183, 42.

¹⁰⁸ "Quia est campus Dei, ideo filium suum generavit tanquam florem amoenum." Jacobus de Voragine, *Mariale Aureum*, 305.

Mary is the "sweet field." While this is physically true in the Incarnation, in another sense, Mary is the good soil who receives Jesus spiritually. She is the "good ground" of Matthew 13:23: "He that received the seed into good ground is he who hears the word, and understands it, who also bears fruit and brings forth a hundred-fold."

Catherine develops the idea of Mary as a field in greater length, weaving this figure with other images of the warmth of God's love:

Human pride certainly ought to be ashamed to see God so humbled in the womb of the glorious Virgin Mary, who was that sweet field, where was sown the seed of the Incarnate Word, the Son of God. Truly...in this blessed and sweet field of Mary this Word was grafted into her flesh, as the seed which is cast on the earth. Through the warmth of the sun it germinates and draws out the flower and the fruit and the husk remains on the earth. So He truly did, through the warmth and the fire of the divine charity which God had for the human race, casting the seed of His Word in the field of Mary. O blessed and gentle Mary, you have given us the flower of the gentle Jesus. And when did this gentle flower produce the fruit? When He was grafted upon the wood of the most holy cross because then we received the perfect life.¹⁰⁹

Just as the warmth of the sun is necessary for the growth of the seed, so is it necessary to have good soil in which the seed may develop. Mary does not just receive the seed. As an active cooperator with God, she has "given us the flower of the gentle Jesus." This passage makes clear the association of the Incarnation with the death of Jesus. Jesus, the seed sown in Mary, bears the fruit upon the cross, enabling humanity to experience perfect life, the life of grace leading to everlasting life. As Catherine writes in the same prayer, Mary is the "germinator of the fruit."¹¹⁰

Catherine invokes Mary as God's temple: "O Mary, Mary! Temple of the Trinity!"¹¹¹ The word "temple" recalls Paul's words to the Corinthians: "You are the

¹⁰⁹ "Ben si deve vergognare l'umana superbia di vedere Dio tanto umiliato nel ventre della gloriosa Vergine Maria, la quale fu quello campo dolce, dove fu seminato il seme della Parola incarnata del Figliuolo di Dio. Veramente...in questo benedetto e dolce campo di Maria fece questo Verbo innestato nella carne sua, come il seme che si gitta nella terra, che per lo caldo del sole germina e trae fuore il fiore e il frutto e il guscio rimane alla terra: cosi veramente fece, per lo caldo e fuoco della divina carità che Dio ebbe all'umana generazione, gittando il seme della parola sua nel campo di Maria. O beata e dolce Maria, tu ci hai donato il fiore del dolce Gesù. E quando produsse il frutto questo dolce fiore? Quando fu innestato in su il legno della santissima croce perocchè allora ricevemmo vita perfetta" (Letter 342, V, 138). This letter addressed to Don Roberto da Napoli, a diocesan priest, was written in late June 1375, according to Noffke. For an almost exact copy of this passage, see Catherine's letter to Monna Pavola, (Letter 144, II, 282).

¹¹⁰ "O Maria portatrice del fuoco! Maria porgetrice de misericordia, Maria germinatrice del fructo" (*Oratio* XI, 118).

¹¹¹ "O Maria, Maria tempio della Trinità!" (*Oratio* XI, 118).

temple of the living God" (2 Cor. 6:16) and also "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?... Glorify God dwelling within your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Luigi Gambero notes: "The symbolism of the temple, applied either to the Lord's body or to the womb of the Virgin Mother, recurs frequently in the writings of the Church Fathers."¹¹² Ambrose (d. 397) speaks of the body of Mary as a temple: "The body of the virgin is the temple of God."¹¹³ Gregory Nazianzen (d. 390), likewise, describes Mary as the temple: "For the Mother is the temple of Christ, Christ is the Temple of the Word."¹¹⁴ Bede (d. 735) names her the "temple of the Holy Spirit."¹¹⁵ A number of other Fathers also use this symbol.¹¹⁶ Jacobus de Voragine gives an extensive explanation of Mary as a temple.¹¹⁷ The image of temple serves Catherine well, as it did many authors before her, since in the Incarnation, Mary becomes quite literally the temple, with God physically dwelling within her.

While probably unaware of the Greek expression, *Theotokos*, Catherine, nevertheless portrays Mary in images suggesting the "God bearer." Mary is the "bearer of the fire."¹¹⁸ In a similar expression, Cyril of Alexandria calls Mary "bearer of the light."¹¹⁹ Jacobus de Voragine develops the idea of Mary being filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit.¹²⁰ Catherine frequently applies "fire" to God. God is "the eter-

¹¹² Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, trans. Thomas Buffer (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 163, n. 6.

¹¹³ "Nam si corpus virginis Dei templum est." Ambrose, *De Virginibus*, 2, 2; PL 16, 211, 18.

¹¹⁴ Gregory Nazianzen, *Poemata Quae Spectant ad Alios*, 7; PG 37, 1565.

¹¹⁵ "Templum Spiritus sancti," Bede, *Homilia II. In Festo Visitationis Beatae Mariae*; PL 94, 16.

¹¹⁶ Ambrose also uses the image as a caution: "Mary was the temple of God not the god of the temple." "Maria erat templum Dei, non Deus templi." Ambrose, *De Spiritu Sancto*, III, XI; PL 16, 795 A. Isidore of Seville (D. 636) calls Mary, the "temple of God" "Templum Dei," St. Isidore, *De Ortu et Obitu Patrum*, LXVII, 111; PL 83, 148 C. Ildelfonsus (d. 667) describes Mary as "the temple, singularly unique in God's making" "Templum singulariter unicum factoris sui est." Ildelfonsus, *Liber De Virginitate Perpetua S. Mariae* X; PL 96, 95.

¹¹⁷ Jacobus de Voragine, *Mariale Aureum*, 392-394.

¹¹⁸ "O Maria portatrice del fuoco!" (*Oratio* XI, 118).

¹¹⁹ Cyril of Alexandria, *Homily XI*; PG 77, 1032 - C.

¹²⁰ According to Jacobus, Mary was filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit in the Incarnation and at the Spirit's coming at Pentecost. She was so totally inflamed, totally purified, totally enlightened, and totally united with God by the fire of the Holy Spirit that she warmed the cold, purified the unclean, enlightened the confused, and united with God those who were separated. "Beata autem Virgo non tantum recepit Spiritum sanctum, sed etiam ipsum plenissime habuit in sui sanctificatione, in Spiritu sancti superventione, in Filii Dei incarnatione; et nihilominus ipsum Spiritum sanctum cum Apostolis in Pentecoste recepit in visibili ostensione; et ideo ille ignis divinus totam eam inflammavit, totam purificavit, totam illuminavit, et totam cum Deo univit; ita quod ista inflammabat frigidus, purgabat immundos, illuminabat tenebrosos, et uniebat cum Deo divisos." Jacobus de Voragine, *Mariale Aureum*, 195.

nal Fire,"¹²¹ the "Fire and abyss of charity,"¹²² and the "Fire that always burns."¹²³

Mary is a "chariot" that brings the fire of God's love: "O Mary, chariot of fire, you bore the fire, hidden and veiled under the ashes of your humanity."¹²⁴ Catherine expresses the same idea in similar words in a letter: "She is that means, who rightly is a chariot of fire, who conceiving in herself the Word of the only-begotten Son of God, brought and gave the fire of love because He is love itself."¹²⁵ Mary brings and gives the "fire of love." What is striking in Catherine's writings is the active manner in which Mary is the "means" by which Jesus comes. Mary brings and gives Jesus, who is described as the "fire of love" and "love itself."

Others in the tradition had compared Mary with a chariot. For Modestus of Jerusalem (d. 634), Mary is the wonderful chariot which bore the Word of God.¹²⁶ The ancient Syro-Maronite Rite employs this image in its liturgy. Thus the weekly Evening prayer on Tuesday refers to Mary as the "chariot of God's flesh."¹²⁷ The Office for the Visitation of Mary in the same Rite attests: "The King was seated in His chariot full of majesty"¹²⁸ Gregory Narek (d. 1010), many of whose writings have passed into the Armenian Liturgy, speaks of Mary as "the chariot of Him who sits upon the cherubim."¹²⁹

Catherine's image of the chariot of fire may have been suggested by the chariot that took Elijah into heaven (2 Kings 2:11). Catherine may also have recalled Jesus' words in the Gospel of Luke: "I have come to bring fire to the earth and how I wish it were blazing already!" (Luke 12:49). Catherine uses this image of the "chariot of fire" for Jesus in *Il Dialogo*, where the Father declares: "Then the chariot of fire of

¹²¹ "Fuoco eterno" (*Oratio* XIV, 168). See also *Oratio* XIX, 210.

¹²² "Fuoco e abisso di carità" (*Oratio* VIII, 82). See also *Oratio* XX, 222.

¹²³ "Fuoco che sempre ardi!" (*Oratio* XXII, 250).

¹²⁴ "O Maria carro di fuoco, tu portasti el fuoco nascosto e velato sotto la cennere della tua umanità" (*Oratio* XI, 118).

¹²⁵ "Ella è quello mezzo, che drittamente è uno carro di fuoco, che, concependo in sè il Verbo dell'unigenito Figliuolo di Dio, recò e donò il fuoco dell'amore: perocch' egli è esso amore" (Letter 184, III, 120). This letter was sent to the Prior and the brothers of the Compagnia della Vergine Maria.

¹²⁶ Modestus of Jerusalem, "Encomium in Dormitionem SS. Deiparae"; PG 86, 3309.

¹²⁷ "The chariot of the four-faced Winged Creatures with their radiance from within, like glowing flames, who go wherever the Spirit prompts them, cannot be compared with you, O chariot of God's flesh." Francis Acharya, "Evening Prayer on Tuesday," *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit: The Prayer of Asian Churches*, vol. I (Kerala, India: Kurisumala Ashram, 1983), 73.

¹²⁸ Francis Acharya, "Evening Prayer for the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth," *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit: The Prayer of Asian Churches*, vol. II (Kerala, India: Kurisumala Ashram, 1982), 67.

¹²⁹ *Testi mariani del primo Millennio* a cura di Georges Gharib, Ermanno M. Toniolo, Luigi Gambero, Gerardo Di Nola, vol. IV (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1991), 583.

My only-begotten Son came, who brought the fire of My charity in your humanity with the abundance of mercy."¹³⁰ Jesus, as the visible manifestation of the Father's love, is the chariot: "His only Son, who came as a chariot of fire, manifesting to us the fire of ineffable love and mercy of the eternal Father."¹³¹ Catherine's employment of the figure of the chariot for Mary illustrates the close association she sees between Mary and Jesus in the work of salvation.

The prayer on the Annunciation provides us with another expression that Catherine directs to Mary, which, in this instance, she applies elsewhere to Jesus and the Father: "O Mary, peaceful sea! Mary, giver of peace!"¹³² In *Il Dialogo*, Catherine relates this image to God the Father.¹³³ In other places, she describes Jesus as the "peaceful sea."¹³⁴ Giuliana Cavallini observes: "Applying to Mary the image of the 'peaceful sea' which she ordinarily uses in association to the Divinity, Catherine underlines the identification of the Virgin with the Word who is in her."¹³⁵

Why is Mary the "peaceful sea"? An association had developed through the centuries between Mary and the sea. Jerome (d. 420) interpreted the meaning of Mary's name to be "drop of [the water of] the sea" or "bitter sea."¹³⁶ Jaroslav Pelikan points out that Jerome's actual word was *stillam*, "drop of water," but by the time Isidore of Seville (d. 636) considered the etymology, Jerome's word was understood to be *stellam* or "star."¹³⁷ Bede follows this interpretation of Mary's name as "star of the sea."¹³⁸ Bernard, in his homilies, further develops this theme of Mary as

¹³⁰ "Poi che venne il carro del fuoco de l'unigenito mio Figliuolo, il quale recò il fuoco della mia carità ne l'umanità vostra con l'abondanza della misericordia" (*Il Dialogo*, LVIII, 150).

¹³¹ "Ci mandò il Verbo dell'unico suo Figliuolo, il quale venne come uno carro di fuoco, manifestandoci il fuoco dell'amore ineffabile e la misericordia del Padre eterno" (Letter 35, I, 131). This letter was written to three Olivetan monks, Frate Niccolò di Ghida, Frate Giovanni Zerri, and Frate Niccolò di Jacomo di Vannuzzo. Noffke locates this letter between December 20, 1377, and January 15, 1378.

¹³² "O Maria mare pacifico, Maria donatrice di pace" (*Oratio* XI, 118).

¹³³ "He is the gate and the way by which they pass to enter into Me, the peaceful sea." "Egli è la porta e la via unde passano ad intrare in me, mare pacifico" (*Il Dialogo*, XLII, 109). See also *Il Dialogo*, CXII, 317.

¹³⁴ See letters 144 and 342.

¹³⁵ "Applicando a Maria la immagine del 'mare pacifico' di cui ordinariamente si serve in rapporto alla Divinità, Caterina sottolinea la immedesimazione della Vergine col Verbo che è in lei." Giuliana Cavallini, *Le Orazioni*, 118, note 3). For another example, see Letter 146.

¹³⁶ "Melius autem est, ut dicamus sonare eam stellam [stillam] maris, sive amarum mare." Jerome, *Liber de Nominibus Hebraicis*, 92; PL 23, 842.

¹³⁷ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 94.

¹³⁸ "Interpretatur enim stella maris," Bede, *In Festo Annuntiationis Beatae Mariae*, I; PL 94, 10-11.

the "star of the sea."¹³⁹ Jacobus de Voragine states that Mary is called the sea because just as all the waters are gathered in the sea, so all graces are gathered in Mary.¹⁴⁰

Catherine's use of symbols, such as the sea, is always related to the salvation of humanity. Mary is certainly a sea of peace in her own tranquility but Catherine's concern is to present Mary as a source of peace for others. Mary is the giver of peace in the stages of redemption. She is a giver of peace in bringing Jesus, who is peace, to the world. Jesus, by His self-giving on the cross, reconciles humanity with God and through that peace reconciles men and women with each other. Mary, also, supports believers in living in peace with God and each other. Thus, Mary is the "mother of the peace of the Son of God."¹⁴¹ She is especially a giver of peace in giving consolation to those who are troubled and seek comfort in her care, with a peace that comes from the Son of God.

For Catherine, Jesus' Incarnation in the "womb of Mary" initiates the redemption. Mary is an active participant in this drama in which, by her free acceptance, she manifests the dignity and freedom of the human will. She is the necessary means for the union of Jesus and humanity. Thus, Mary is the one who brings Jesus in the Incarnation.

As Catherine attempts to fathom the mystery of Mary's cooperation, she draws upon images such as flour, a book, a tablet, soil, a plant, and a field. Through these images, Mary is portrayed as the one who brings and gives Jesus to humanity. The close relationship Mary has with Jesus is reflected in such images as the "chariot of fire" and the "peaceful sea," images which Catherine also uses for Jesus. In physically bearing Jesus, Mary brings the fire, Jesus, the incarnate mercy of God, to humanity.

Mary's Cooperation with Jesus in the Passion

In her prayer on the Annunciation, Catherine applies to Mary the bold title, *ricomperatrice*: "Mary, redemptress of the human race."¹⁴² *Ricomperatrice* is based on the verb *ricomprare* which literally means "to buy back," "to pick up," "to set free," or "to recover."¹⁴³ Catherine calls Jesus the *ricompratore*.¹⁴⁴ The verb form is

¹³⁹ "El nomen, inquit, *Virginis Maria...quod interpretatum maris stella dicitur.*" Bernard, *Super Missus Est*, II, 17; PL 183, 70.

¹⁴⁰ "Mare dicitur beata Maria.... Sicut enim in mare est congregatio omnium aquarum, sic in ipsa Virgine est congregatio omnium gratiarum." Jacobus de Voragine, *Mariale Aureum*, 230.

¹⁴¹ "Madre della pace del Figliuolo di Dio" (Letter 30, I, 114).

¹⁴² "Maria ricomperatrice de l'umana generacione" (*Oratio* XI, 118).

¹⁴³ Nicola Zingarelli, *lo Zingarelli 1995: Vocabolario della lingua italiana* XII (Milano: Zanichelli, 1994), 1524.

¹⁴⁴ See Letters 9, 39, 253, 259, 272, and 284. She also uses the word *redentore* for Christ. See *Oratio I and XIII*.

frequently used by Catherine to describe Jesus' work, usually with reference to His precious blood.¹⁴⁵

Catherine initially softens the force of *ricomperatrice* by stating that Jesus' flesh was given by Mary: "For in the Word bearing your flesh, the world was bought back."¹⁴⁶ In a certain sense, Jesus' body is the "flesh of Mary." Thus, Catherine informs Niccolò dei Strozzi, prior of the Pisan Knights Hospitalers of St. John: "This our knight came armed with the armor of the flesh of Mary, which flesh received in itself the blows to repair our flesh."¹⁴⁷ This sense of being a redemptress in giving Jesus His flesh at birth does not imply direct action on Mary's part at the time of the crucifixion.

However, after acknowledging that Mary provided the flesh with which Jesus suffered, Catherine also asserts that Mary actively assisted in the redemption: "Christ redeemed with His passion, and you with sorrow of body and mind."¹⁴⁸ Mary's physical and spiritual suffering, in some way, participated in Jesus' redemptive action. How did Catherine understand this participation?

Church Fathers, such as Irenaeus¹⁴⁹ and Tertullian,¹⁵⁰ emphasize the necessity of Mary's response in faith to the process of redemption through the Eve/Mary comparison. Ambrose, referring to the Incarnation, connects the redemption to Mary's cooperation: "The Virgin gave birth to the salvation of the world, the Virgin brought forth the life of all."¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, regarding the crucifixion, Ambrose asserts: "But Jesus did not choose a helper for the redemption of all.... He accepted the love of a parent, but did not seek the help of another."¹⁵²

¹⁴⁵ For examples of the various forms of the expression see Letter 3 "ricomprati di così prezioso e glorioso sangue," or Letter 15 "ricomprato del pretioso sangue del Figliuolo di Dio," or the reference to Jesus' mission of redemption in Letter 7, "ricomprare l'umana generazione."

¹⁴⁶ "Perché sostenendo la carne tua in nel Verbo fu ricomprato el mondo" (*Oratio* XI, 118).

¹⁴⁷ "Venne armato questo nostro cavaliere colla corazza della carne di Maria, la quale carne ricevette in sé colpi per riparare alle nostre iniquità" (Letter 256, IV, 88). Noffke places this letter between March and early April 1377.

¹⁴⁸ "Cristo ricomprò con la sua passione e tu col dolore del corpo e della mente" (*Oratio* XI, 118).

¹⁴⁹ "And as mankind was bound unto death through a virgin, it is saved by a Virgin: by the obedience of a Virgin the disobedience of a virgin is compensated." Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V, 19, trans. John Keble, *Library of the Fathers*, vol. 42 (Oxford: James Parker and Co., 1872), 494; PG 7, 1175-1176.

¹⁵⁰ "As Eve had believed the serpent, so Mary believed the angel. The delinquency which the one occasioned by believing, the other by believing effaced." Tertullian, "On the Flesh of Christ," XVII, in A. Cleveland Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. III (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986), 536; PL 2, 782.

¹⁵¹ "Virgo genuit mundi salutem, virgo peperit vitam universorum." Ambrose, *Epistola LXII, Ad Theodosium*, 32; PL 16, 1198.

¹⁵² "Sed Jesus non egebat adiutore ad redemptionem omnium.... Suscepit quidem affectum parentis, sed non quaesivit alterius auxilium." Ambrose, *ibid.*, 1218.

Authors, such as Peter Damian (d. 1072) and Anselm (d. 1109), expound on Mary's sufferings at the Cross, but Eadmer (d. 1124) was the first to apply "merit" to Mary's sufferings.¹⁵³ Bernard (d. 1153) depicts the Father accepting Mary's offering of her Son for the redemption of the world at the time of the Presentation. This concept inspired others to elaborate on Mary's share in Christ's passion.¹⁵⁴ Bernard's disciple, Arnold of Bonneval (Arnold of Chartres, d. after 1156), states that Mary, moved by a mother's affection, was one in will with her Son. They offered the holocaust together; He in the blood of His body, she in the blood of her heart.¹⁵⁵

Bonaventure (d. 1274) describes Mary as offering her Son,¹⁵⁶ accepting and being in accord with the divine will, willing that the fruit of her womb should be offered on the cross for us.¹⁵⁷ Pseudo-Albert's *Mariale*, written possibly in the second half of the thirteenth century, asserts that Mary was a "partner and associate, participating in the kingdom as she participated in the Passion."¹⁵⁸ Pseudo-Albert maintains that Mary, because of her faith and compassion at the crucifixion, was able, by the will of her Son who wished to share the merit of the passion, to share the benefits of the redemption even as she had willed to share the suffering of the passion. As a helper of the redemption she was made a mother for the re-creation of all.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ "Et Maria est domina rerum, singula congenitae dignitati per illam quam meruit gratiam restituendo." Eadmer, *De Excellentia Virginis Mariae*, XI; PL 159, 578.

¹⁵⁴ "Offer filium tuum, Virgo sacrata, et benedictum fructum ventris tui Domini repraesenta. Offer ad nostram omnium reconciliationem hostiam sanctam, Deo placentem. Omnino acceptabit Deus Pater oblationem novam." Bernard, *De Purificatione Beatae Mariae*, III; PL 183, 370.

¹⁵⁵ "Movebat enim eum matris affectio, et omnino tunc erat una Christi et Mariae voluntas, unumque holocaustum ambo pariter offerebant Deo: haec in sanguine cordis, hic in sanguine carnis." Arnold, *De Laudibus B. Mariae Virginis*; PL 189, 1727.

¹⁵⁶ "Beata Virgo obtulit filium suum ad sacrificandum." Bonaventure, *De Donis Spiritus Sancti*, VI, n.17, in *S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia*, vol. V (Collegii S. Bonaventurae: Ad Claras Aquas, 1891), 486.

¹⁵⁷ "Beata Virgo fuit praesens, acceptans et concordans voluntati divinae. Et placuit ei, quod pretium uteri sui offerretur in cruce pro nobis." *Ibid.*, n. 15, 486.

¹⁵⁸ "Beata autem Virgo non est vicaria, sed coadjutrix et socia, particeps in regno quae fuit particeps passionum pro genere humano." Pseudo-Albert, *Mariale*, vol. XXXVII, in *Opera Omnia B. Alberti Magni* (Paris: Ludovicum Vivès, 1898), 81.

¹⁵⁹ "Sola beatissima Virgo tunc fidem habuit, et compassionem crucifixi Dei et hominis, et per passionem ex compassione patientis. Et sic sola fuit, cui datum est hoc privilegium, scilicet communicatio passionis, cui Filius ut dare posset praemium, voluit communicare passionis meritum, et ut ipsam participem faceret beneficii redemptionis, participem esse voluit et poenae passionis: quatenus sicut fuit adiutrix redemptionis per compassionem, ita mater fieret omnium per recreationem: et sicut totus mundus obligatur Deo per suam passionem, ita et Dominae omnium per compassionem." *Ibid.*, 219.

John Tauler (d. 1361), a Dominican who was contemporaneous with Catherine's early life, maintains that Mary offered herself with her Son at the Purification, as a living host for the glory of God and the salvation of all humanity.¹⁶⁰ Tauler asserts that Mary shared her Son's obedience "even to death." As Jesus suffered in body, she suffered through compassion. Since she had been chosen to cooperate in the generation of the Redeemer, God wished her to cooperate in Christ's passion. God accepted her oblation as an acceptable sacrifice for the salvation of the human race by which she became an eternal mediatrix between God and humanity.¹⁶¹

While such ideas circulated among some theologians and preachers, the extent to which Catherine would have been familiar with them is not clear. Those Dominicans who are considered to have had the most influence on Catherine are silent on Mary's role in the redemption. Thomas does not present Mary as sharing in Christ's passion. Jacobus de Voragine, while declaring that Mary consented to Jesus' death,¹⁶² does not hold for an immediate cooperation of Mary in the objective redemption.¹⁶³ Jacobus speaks of Mary as *adjutrix*, saying that Mary was the helper of our redemption and our justification by giving birth to the one who earned our salvation.¹⁶⁴ Domenico Cavalca, while describing Mary's intense sorrow at the crucifixion in *Lo Specchio della croce*, does not present Mary as a partaker in Christ's passion. Alvaro Grion, O.P., who had proposed that Ubertino da Casale's *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae Jesu* was the major influence on Catherine, offers words he considers equivalent to *ricomperatrice*, which he finds in Casale's book, yet *ricomperatrice* is still not found.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ "Elle s'est offerte elle-même, avec son très doux Jésus, comme une vivant Hostie à la gloire de Dieu et pour le salut de tous les hommes." John Tauler, *Sermo pro festo Purificat. B. M. Virginis*, ed. R. P. Noël, in *Oeuvres complètes de Jean Tauler*, vol. V (Paris: A. Tralin, 1911), 61.

¹⁶¹ "Et sicut Christus Patri obediens fuit usque ad mortem crucis, ita et Beatissima Virgo Maria ad crucis usque mortem Deo obtemperavit: quandoquidem poenam illam quam dilectus Filius ejus sustinuit in corpore suo, ipsa per compassionem in corde pertulit.... Et sicut electa erat a Deo, ut in generatione humani generis redemptioni cooperaretur: ita nihilominus et in passione huic eam voluit cooperari...ejusque oblationem in gratum suscepit sacrificium ad utilitatem et salutem totius humani generis, quo et ipsa perpetua esset mediatrix inter Deum et homines." John Tauler, *Exercitia seu meditatio optima vitae et passionis Jesu Christi*, ed. R. P. Noël, in *Oeuvres complètes de Jean Tauler*, vol. VI (Paris: A. Tralin, 1912), 253-254.

¹⁶² "Mater ejus cum stabat iuxta crucem, secundum rationem assentiebat, quod Filius pateretur et quieta erat, secundum sensualitatem summe dolebat ut merito dicat: Attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus." Jacobus de Voragine, "De planctu B. Mariae Virginis," quoted in Paschalis Lorenzin, O.F.M., *Mariologia Iacobi a Varagine* (Roma: Academia Mariana, 1951), 62.

¹⁶³ Paschalis Lorenzin, O.F.M., *Mariologia Iacobi a Varagine*, 64.

¹⁶⁴ "Adjutrix nostra est Virgo Maria; ipsa enim fuit adjutrix nostrae redemptionis, et nostrae justificationis...quia illum genuit, qui nostram salutem operatus est." Jacobus de Voragine, *Mariologia Aurea*, 13.

¹⁶⁵ "Ipsa fuit omnium generatrix, reconciliatrix, excusatrix et advocata omnium peccatorum."

What significance did *ricomperatrice* have for Catherine? Where did she derive the expression? The term *Co-redemptrix* first appears in a fifteenth-century hymn.¹⁶⁶ The expression *redemptrix* is scarcely used by the Latin Fathers and is not applied to Mary.¹⁶⁷ While Catherine asserts that Mary cooperated with the Passion by her suffering, we do not know what this meant for Catherine. She does not develop the idea any further nor refer to it in other places.

There is a certain sense in which she considers that Mary and the saints somehow assist the process of redemption by their merits. Referring to St. Mary Magdalene, St. Agnes, and St. Martha, Catherine concludes a letter: "I hope, through the abundance of the blood of Jesus Christ, and through the merits of these and of that gentlest Mother, we will enjoy and see Christ face to face."¹⁶⁸ In this passage, the merits of the saints and of Mary, in some way, are joined to the blood of Jesus for the good of souls.

When Catherine records her vision at the time of the death of Niccolò di Toldo, she speaks of his blood being accepted and given value by the blood of Jesus: "He awaited that soul to depart from the body with the eye of mercy turned toward him, as he came to enter into the side, bathed in his blood, which was given value through the blood of the Son of God."¹⁶⁹ Niccolò's sufferings, signified by blood, have been given spiritual significance by the blood of Jesus. Jesus' blood transforms our experiences, such as suffering, and gives them "value."

It would seem that Catherine does not consider that Mary's sufferings were part of the objective redemption strictly speaking because when Catherine describes Jesus' sacrifice, she emphasizes that it was Jesus' divinity which gave redeeming power to His sufferings. She writes: "You disposed Yourself to give us the Word...so that...bearing that humanity, He might make satisfaction to Your justice not in the

Ubertinus di Casali, *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae Jesu*, Liber IV, Cap XV (Torino: Bottega D'Erasmus, 1961), 324.

¹⁶⁶ René Laurentin, *A Year of Grace with Mary*, trans. by Michael J. Wrenn (Dublin: Veritas, 1987), 101.

¹⁶⁷ Prudentius (d. 410) uses the word in the context of an enticement in the trial of a martyr; PL 60, 503. Alcuin (d. 804) describes the cross as *una redemptrix*; PL 100, 291. Hincmar of Rheims (d. 882) repeats Alcuin's expression and ascribes it to a hymn of Ambrose; PL 125, 821. Hildebert of Lavarin (d. 1133) seems to apply the term to *natura*; PL 171, 1406.

¹⁶⁸ "Spero, per l'abondantia del sangue di Gesù Cristo, e per li meriti di costoro, e di quella dolcissima Madre, noi gustaremo e vederemo Cristo a faccia a faccia" (Letter 30, I, 116).

¹⁶⁹ "Aspettava quella anima partita dal corpo, - volto l'occhio della misericordia verso di lui, - quando venne a 'ntrare dentro nel costato, bagnato nel sangue suo, che valeva per lo sangue del Figliuolo di Dio!" (Letter 273, IV, 177). Noffke suggests that this was written shortly after June 13, 1375.

power of the humanity but in the power of the divinity united in it."¹⁷⁰ Catherine's understanding of Mary's cooperation in the Passion cannot be interpreted precisely.

Even though Catherine states that Mary suffers with Jesus, she does not dwell on Mary's psychological anguish at the Cross, as was customary for other spiritual writers of the time. For instance, Jacopone da Todi (d. 1306), in his "Lament of the Virgin," depicts Mary as "a mother frightened and dazed...a mother destroyed by grief," who protests at Jesus' gift of John: "Do not ask this of me; let me die with you...a common grave for son and mother, since ours is a common agony."¹⁷¹ Even Domenico Cavalca, who is considered to have had a great influence on Catherine, borrows from St. Bernard to detail Mary's emotions at the Passion.¹⁷²

While Catherine acknowledges Mary's sorrow, she emphasizes Mary's spiritual union with the desires of her Son. Writing to the nuns at the Monastery of Santa Marta in Siena, Catherine breaks into a prayer to Christ that reflects the senses in which Mary shared the Passion:

I do not know how to see another remedy for us, except that sword which You had in Your heart and soul, sweetest love. That was the hatred that You had for sin and the love You had for the honor of the Father for our salvation. O sweetest love, this was that sword which passed through the heart and soul of the Mother. The Son was pierced in the body and His mother as well because that flesh was from her. Rightly, as her own, which He had drawn from her flesh.¹⁷³

Jesus' body was pierced because of His hatred for sin and His love for the honor of the Father and our salvation. Catherine does not assert that Simeon's prediction of a sword piercing Mary's heart is fulfilled through her sorrow at Jesus' sufferings. According to Catherine, the sword that pierced Mary's soul and her body was the same that pierced Jesus: hatred for sin and love for the honor of the Father and for the salvation of humanity. As we have seen, there is another sense in which Catherine considered Mary to be pierced, in that Jesus' body was from her body.

Reflecting on Mary's desire, Catherine emphasizes that Jesus' desire for the Cross began with His conception: "I see this Word, even as soon as He was written

¹⁷⁰ "Tu disponesti di darci el Verbo...e che...sostenendo egli in essa umanità, fusse soddisfatto a la tua giustizia non in virtù de l'umanità ma in virtù della deità unita in essa" (*Oratio* XI, 124-126).

¹⁷¹ Jacopone da Todi, "The Lament of the Virgin," in *The Lauds*, trans. Serge and Elizabeth Hughes (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 280.

¹⁷² Domenico Cavalca, *Lo Specchio della Croce*, 196-199.

¹⁷³ "Io non ci so vedere altro rimedio, se non quello coltello che tu avesti, dolcissimo amore, nel cuore e nell'anima tua. Ciò fu l'odio che avesti al peccato, l'amore che avesti all'onore del Padre e della nostra salute. O amore dolcissimo, questo fu quello coltello che trapassò el cuore e l'anima della Madre. El Figliuolo era percosso nel corpo, e la Madre similmente; perchè quella carne era di lei. Ragionevole cosa era, come cosa sua, ched elli aveva tratto di lei carne" (Letter 30, I, 112). Noffke dates this letter around May 1374.

in you, He was not without the cross of holy desire. But immediately when He was conceived in you, the desire to die for the salvation of humanity, for which He was incarnated, was grafted and attached to Him. So it was a great cross for Him, to bear that desire for so long when He would have wished that it might be fulfilled at once."¹⁷⁴ Jesus' desire to suffer for humanity begins with the Incarnation. In her vision of the newly born Jesus on Christmas, Catherine had seen a cross on the baby's chest.¹⁷⁵

Clearly for Catherine, Mary shared in Jesus' desire for the salvation of humanity. Caffarini records a vision of Our Lady which took place before the feast of the Assumption: "Before the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, it happened that the virgin herself saw Our Lady sitting near the Son in great glory. In between them was a cross not only bleeding nor only burning but as if bleeding and burning together at the same time."¹⁷⁶ As has been seen in Catherine's writings, both fire and blood are used to represent God's love. The blood shows the fire of love, as she tells Suor Daniella: "In this blood you will find the fire of the divine charity."¹⁷⁷ A bleeding and burning cross symbolizes the intensity of the love of God for humanity manifested in the Passion. This shared love for the Father's will and for souls binds Jesus and Mary.

¹⁷⁴ "Io veggo questo Verbo, subito che egli è scritto in te, non essere senza la croce del santo desiderio; ma subito che egli fu concepito in te gli fu innestato ed annexo il desiderio di murire per la salute de l'uomo, per la quale egli era incarnato; unde grande croce gli fu a portare tanto tempo quello desiderio el quale egli avarebbe voluto che subito se fusse adempito" (*Oratio* XI, 128). Another example is found in Catherine's letter to Monna Pavola: "As soon as this Word was engrafted into our flesh in the womb of Mary, He was subject to the judgment of the most shameful death of the cross, placed in the field of this life to fight for His spouse, to take her away from the hands of the devil who possessed her as an adulterer." "Subitochè questo verbo fu innestato nella carne nostra nel ventre di Maria, subito el giudicò all'obrobriosa morte della croce, posto nel campo di questa vita a combattere per la sposa sua, per trarla delle mani del demonio, che la possedeva come adultera" (Letter 97, II, 111).

¹⁷⁵ "Puer habebat in pectore ad modum unius crucis." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, vi, 111.

¹⁷⁶ "Ante festum assumptionis Domine nostre contigit ipsam virginem videre prefatam Dominam nostram iuxta Filium in magna gloria residentem et in medio eorum erat quedam crux nec solum sanguinea nec solum ignea, sed quasi sanguinea et ignea simul mixta." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, vi, 88-89.

¹⁷⁷ "Nel quale sangue troverai il fuoco della divina carità" (Letter 308, IV, 291). Noffke dates this letter between late 1378 and early 1379. Catherine informs Bartolomeo della Pace Smeducci: "The blood was shed with the fire of the love that God had for the human race." "Isparto fu el sangue col fuoco dell'amore che Dio all'umana generatione ebbe" (Misciattelli, Letter IX, VI, 25).

Catherine teaches this union of wills between Jesus and Mary in another way. She compares Mary to warm wax,¹⁷⁸ which symbolizes Mary's receptivity to the seal of the Holy Spirit in the Incarnation as well as to the imprint of Jesus' desire for our salvation: "I see, O fire of charity, that there is another union here. He has the form of the flesh. And she, as the warm wax, has received the imprint of the desire and of the love of our salvation, received from the seal, and of the seal of the Holy Spirit. This seal and grafting has incarnated that divine eternal Word."¹⁷⁹ Just as the Holy Spirit imprinted the seal which is the Word in Mary, so the Holy Spirit imprinted in her "the desire and love of our salvation." This is "another union." In addition to the physical union of Jesus' body in the womb of Mary, there is the union of desire for our salvation.

Catherine insists that Mary desired the salvation of humanity so intensely that she even wanted Jesus to suffer and to die:

Now the hatred and love is so intensified in the Mother and in the Son, that the Son runs to death for the great love which He has to give us life. So great is His hunger and great desire of holy obedience to the Father, that He has lost self-love of Himself and runs to the cross. That sweetest and dearest mother does the same, who willingly loses the love of the Son, for not only does she not do as a mother who draws Him back from death, but she wishes to become the ladder and wishes that He die. Indeed, this is not surprising because she was wounded by the arrow of love for our salvation.¹⁸⁰

Just as Catherine's Jesus runs to the cross with eagerness to give His life, so Catherine's Mary "wishes that He die." She is "wounded by the arrow of love for our salvation." Catherine's Mary is not the *Stabat Mater*, emotionally devastated by the sufferings of the Son. Catherine's Mary would even have made herself the ladder to put Jesus on the cross so intense is her desire for the salvation of humanity.

¹⁷⁸ Jacobus de Voragine compares the wax of the candles used at the feast of the Purification to Mary's virginity because they were created solely by bees, without any other component: "Prima est virginitas in carne, quae significatur per ceram, quae generatur ab apibus, sine corruptione." Jacobus de Voragine, *Mariale Aureum*, 63.

¹⁷⁹ "Io m'aveggo, o fuoco di carità, che ci à un'altra unione. Egli à la forma della carne, ed ella, come cera calda, à ricevuta la impronta del desiderio e dell'amore della nostra salute, ricevuta dal sugello e del suggello dello Spirito Santo, el quale sugello e inesto à incarnato quel verbo eterno divino" (Letter 30, I, 112).

¹⁸⁰ "Ora è tanto multiplicato l'odio e l'amore nella Madre e nel Figliuolo, che 'l Figliuolo corre alla morte per lo grande amore che egli à di darci la vita; tanta è la fame e 'l grande desiderio della santa obbedientia del Padre, ch'egli à perduto l'amore proprio di sè e corre alla croce. Questo medesimo fa quella dolcissima e carissima Madre, che volontariamente perde l'amore del Figliuolo: che non tanto ch'ella faccia come madre, che 'l ritraga dalla morte, ma ella si vuole fare scala e vuole ch'egli muoia. Ma non è grande fatto, però ch' ella era vulnerata della saetta dell'amore della nostra salute" (Letter 30, I, 112-113).

Giacinto D'Urso has called attention to a painting by Guido da Siena that may have suggested this image to Catherine. During Catherine's life, this painting was in San Domenico, the Dominican Church near Catherine's family home. In the painting, Christ is climbing the cross by means of a ladder. Jesus has a foot on the cross and gives His hand to a man who is ready to nail Him to the cross. Mary is portrayed not as a sorrowful spectator but as standing next to Jesus with a strong and energetic composure. Her left arm is around His side, signifying her union with Him. Mary's right arm is extended and her finger pointed, driving away a young man who attempts to interfere.¹⁸¹ Catherine would have been very familiar with this painting which illustrates Mary's conformity with God's desire to save humanity through the death of the Son.

In a letter to Don Roberto, Catherine asserts that Mary gave the flower of Jesus who bore fruit on the cross, but the husk remains. The husk is Jesus' desire for the honor of the Father and the salvation of souls. Mary shares this desire of Jesus:

And why did we say that the husk remains on the earth? What was this husk? It was the will of the only begotten Son of God, who, inasmuch as He was human, was clothed with the desire of the honor of the Father and of our salvation. And this immeasurable desire was so strong, that He ran as one in love, enduring suffering and shame and insult, even to the shameful death of the cross. Consider then, venerable father, that this same was in Mary, that is, that she was not able to desire other than the honor of God and the salvation of the creature. Therefore the Doctors, expressing the immeasurable charity of Mary, say that she would have made a ladder of herself to place her Son on the cross, if she had no other way. And all this was because the will of the Son had remained in her.¹⁸²

After describing the immeasurable desire that drove Jesus to the cross, Catherine states: "This same was in Mary, that is, that she was not able to desire other than the honor of God and the salvation of souls." The will of the Son is in her, because

¹⁸¹ Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., "La dottrina di Maria. Analisi mariologica della lett. 144 (XXXIV) dell'epistolario cateriniano," *Rassegna di ascetica e mistica, S. Caterina da Siena* 24/1 (1975): 34, n.6. See also Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., "Lettura cateriniana degli artisti senesi," *Patrona d'Italia, Santa Caterina* 25/1 (1974): 18. This painting has most recently been kept in the Palazzo Comunale in Siena.

¹⁸² "E perchè dicemmo che il guscio rimane alla terra? Quale fu questo guscio? Fu la volontà dell'unigenito figliuolo di Dio, il quale, in quanto uomo, era vestito del desiderio dell'onore del Padre e della salute nostra: e tanto fu forte questo smisurato desiderio, che corse come innamorato, sostenendo pene e vergogne e vituperio, infino all'obrobriosa morte della croce. Considerando dunque, venerabile Padre, che questo medesimo fu in Maria, cioè che ella non poteva desiderare altro che l'onore di Dio e la salute della creatura; però dicono li Dottori, manifestando la smisurata carità di Maria, che di sè medesima avrebbe fatta scala per ponere in croce il Figliuolo suo, se altro modo non avesse avuto. E tutto questo, era, perchè la volontà del Figliuolo era rimasta in lei" (Letter 342, V, 138). This letter was sent to Don Roberto. For an almost exact copy of this passage see Catherine's letter to Monna Pavola (Letter 144, II, 282).

Mary shares His intense desire. It is not evident who the "Doctors" are to whom Catherine is referring. Dupré Theseider, who thoroughly researched Catherine's sources, is unable to identify the specific origin of this idea. He suggests that this was Catherine's derivation of a concept of Mary's active sharing in the Passion that was current in the theology of the time.¹⁸³

The idea that Mary conformed her will to that of the Father at the crucifixion was present in the tradition. Ambrose depicts Mary as focusing more on the salvation to be achieved than on the cruel death: "Nor was Mary below what was becoming the mother of Christ. When the apostles fled, she stood at the Cross, and with pious eyes beheld her Son's wounds, for she did not look at the death of her Offspring but the salvation of the world."¹⁸⁴ Bonaventure asserts a willingness on Mary's part to give up her Son: "There should be no doubt that her courageous soul and most constant reason were willing even to give over her only Son for the salvation of the human race, as the mother was conformed to the Father in everything."¹⁸⁵ Meister Eckhart, while accepting that Mary might have been grief-stricken, makes a distinction between Mary's outward emotions and her interior conformity with God's will: "Despite her grief and the various things she said, in her inner self our Lady remained in motionless detachment."¹⁸⁶

D'Urso believes that the idea that Mary supported Jesus in His desire to suffer was inspired by Dominican preachers, particularly Jacobus de Voragine.¹⁸⁷ In one of his homilies on the Passion, Jacobus stresses Mary's conformity with God's will: "She stood, grieving with sorrow, wounded with bitterness, but resolute in mind and understanding, and confirmed in God's will because she knew it was that her Son suffered for the redemption of the human race."¹⁸⁸ In his *De planctu B. Mariae Virginis*, Jacobus specifically states that Mary would have placed Christ on the

¹⁸³ Eugenio Dupré Theseider, *Epistolario di Santa Caterina* (Roma: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1940), 142, n.6.

¹⁸⁴ Ambrose, "Letter LXIII," in *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, vol. X (2nd), ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 473. "Fugientibus apostolis, ante crucem stabat, et piis spectabat oculis filius vulnera; quia expectabat non pignoris mortem, sed mundi salutem." PL 16, 1218.

¹⁸⁵ "Nullo tamen modo est dubitandum, quin virilis eius animus et ratio constantissima vellet etiam Unigenitum tradere pro salute generis humani, ut Mater per omnia conformis esset Patri." S. Bonaventura, *Opera Omnia*, I (Ad Claras Aquas: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882), 861.

¹⁸⁶ Meister Eckhart, "Tractate on Detachment," in *The Best of Meister Eckhart*, ed. Halycon Backhouse (New York City: Crossroad, 1998), 95.

¹⁸⁷ D'Urso, "La dottrina di Maria," 34-35. See especially 35, n.7.

¹⁸⁸ "Stabat dolore anxiosa, amaritudine vulnerata, mente autem et intellectu erecta, et firmata in Dei voluntate, quia sciebat esse, ut filius suus pateretur pro redemptione humani generis." Jacobus de Voragine, "Sermones Quadragesimales," *Sermones Aurei* (Tolosae: Orphanarum Sancti Joseph a Bono Auxilio, 1874), 523.

cross: "And, however, you were so conformed to the Divine will that you were most eager for the salvation of the human race, so that, I would dare to say, if no one were found who might crucify your Son, that the salvation of humanity might follow and the will of God might be fulfilled, if it had been necessary according to reason, you, yourself, would have placed [Him] on the cross."¹⁸⁹

This union of wills between Jesus and Mary is most evident at Jesus' death, when, Catherine states, Mary received Jesus' soul: "She, like a tree of mercy, receives in herself the consumed soul of the Son, which soul was wounded and hurt by the will of the Father. She, as a tree which has in herself the graft, is wounded by the sword of hatred and of love."¹⁹⁰ Jesus' soul is in Mary in the sense that she is wounded by the desire for the honor of the Father and for our salvation, and by hatred for sin.

Mary not only "receives" Christ's soul at His death, she gives Him to humanity. Catherine writes to her mother, Monna Lapa: "I wish that you may learn from that gentle mother Mary who, for the honor of God and our salvation, gave us her Son, dead upon the wood of the most holy cross."¹⁹¹ Mary gives Jesus to humanity "for the honor of God and our salvation." Mary does not passively consent to the death of her Son but she actively "gave us her Son, dead upon the wood of the most holy cross." How does Mary give her crucified Son? According to Catherine, Mary understood that the passion and death of her Son would result in the redemption. In desiring that redemption, she desired the means, which would be the death of her Son.

Thus, we see that Mary cooperates with the Redemption by giving Jesus the flesh with which He suffered. Mary also participates in Jesus' Passion by her sufferings of mind and body. She is pierced with the same sword of hatred for sin and love for the honor of God and the salvation of humanity that Jesus was. So much does she desire the salvation of humanity that she would willingly have assisted Jesus onto the cross if it were necessary. Mary, for Catherine, is not a distraught

¹⁸⁹ "Et tamen ita divinae voluntati conformis fuisti, ut salutis humani generis avidissima esses, ut dicere audeam quod si nullus fuisset repertus qui Filium crucifigeret, ad hoc ut sequeretur salus hominem et adimpleretur voluntas Dei secundum rationem si oportuisset, ipsa posuisset (posuisses) in cruce." Jacobus de Voragine, *De planctu B. Mariae Virginis*, quoted in Giacinto D'Urso, O.P., "Giacomo da Varazze, maestro di S. Caterina da Siena," in *Jacopo da Varagine: Atti del Convegno di Studi, Varazze, 13-14 aprile 1985*, 202.

¹⁹⁰ "Ella, come arbore di misericordia, riceve in sè l'anima consumata del Figliuolo, la quale anima è vulnerata e ferita della volontà del Padre; ella, come arbore che à in sè lo 'nnesso, è vulnerata col coltello dell'odio e dell'amore" (Letter 30, I, 112).

¹⁹¹ "Io voglio che impariate da quella dolce madre Maria, che per onore di Dio e salute nostra ci donò il Figliuolo, morto in sul legno della santissima croce" (Letter 240, IV, 31-32). Noffke places this letter in October or early November 1376. For a fuller text of this passage, see Appendix, note 9.

onlooker of the Redemption but is an active participant who spiritually consents and desires Jesus' death as necessary for the redemption of the world. At His death, she receives His soul, and gives Him to humanity.

Catherine and the Immaculate Conception

Of special interest to historians of mariology are Catherine's observations on the Immaculate Conception. Catherine and her contemporaries struggled with the question of the manner in which Mary herself was redeemed. Catherine's position on the Immaculate Conception represents a stage in the development of the dogma from which the Church has since moved.

In *Oratio XVI*, her prayer on August 16, 1379, Catherine straightforwardly asserts that Mary experienced original sin. While many Franciscans, following Scotus, promoted belief in the Immaculate Conception, the Dominicans for several centuries resisted the development, heeding the theological reservations of Thomas and Albert.¹⁹² These differences were possible until the promulgation of the dogma in the

¹⁹² Albert in his commentary on the third book of the Sentences, writes: "We say that the Blessed Virgin was not sanctified before animation: and saying otherwise is a heresy condemned by Blessed Bernard in his letter to [the canons of] Lyons, and by all the masters of Paris." "Dicimus, quod Beata Virgo non fuit sanctificata ante animationem: et qui dicunt oppositum, est haeresis condemnata a Beato Bernardo in epistola ad Lugdunenses, et a Magistris omnibus Parisiensibus." Albertus Magnus, *Commentarii in III Sententiarum*, vol. xxviii, B. Alberti Magni, *Opera Omnia* (Paris: Ludovicum Vives, 1894), d.3, a.4 sol., 47. Thomas's teaching on Mary's sanctification is developed in Question 27 of the *Tertia Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*. Some scholars find ambiguity in Thomas's earlier works. In his commentary on the first book of the Sentences, Thomas states that Mary was immune from actual and original sin: "Et talis fuit puritas beatæ Virginis, quæ a peccato originali et actuali immunis fuit." Thomas Aquinas, *Commentum in Primum Librum Sententiarum*, vol. vii, *Thomæ Aquinatis Opera Omnia* (Paris: Ludovicum Vives, 1873), d. xlv, q.1, a. iii, 529. However, in his commentary on the third book of the Sentences, after explaining that grace could not be given before the infusion of the soul, Thomas adds that neither could grace have been granted at the instant of the infusion of Mary's soul since Christ alone did not need redemption: "Ad secundum quaestionem dicendum, quod sanctificatio beatæ Virginis non potuit esse decenter ante infusionem animæ, quia gratiæ capax nondum erat, sed nec etiam in ipso instanti infusionis, ut scilicet per gratiam tunc sibi infusam conservaretur, ne culpam originalem incurreret. Christus enim hoc singulariter in humano genere habet ut redemptione non egeat, quia caput nostrum est, sed omnibus convenit redimi per ipsum. Hoc autem esse non posset, si alia anima inveniretur quæ nunquam, originali macula fuisset infecta; et ideo nec beatæ Virgini, nec alicui præter Christum hoc concessum est." Thomas Aquinas, *Commentum in Tertium Librum Sententiarum*, vol. ix, *Thomæ Aquinatis Opera Omnia* (Paris: Ludovicum Vives, 1873), d. iii, q.1, a. i, 51. Thomas Mullaney, O.P., argues that Thomas, born near Naples where the feast of Mary's Conception had been celebrated for generations, originally held for the Immaculate Conception, but developed an attitude of caution under the influence of the Church in Rome which did not celebrate the feast. See Thomas U. Mullaney, O.P., "Mary Immaculate in the Writings of St. Thomas," *The Thomist XVII* (1954): 433-468. One of the reasons the Dominicans

Apostolic Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus* by Pius IX on December 8, 1854, although with the spread of the liturgical celebration of the feast of the Conception such opposition became steadily muted.

Catherine's prayer, *Oratio XVI*, opens as a reflection on God's power to give life to the dead, an idea which may have been influenced by the feast of the Assumption on the preceding day, although the first part of the prayer has no reference to Mary. Without reference to what has preceded, the prayer abruptly changes as Catherine begins to propound reasons why Mary was not immaculately conceived:

Of the substance of Mary, He clothed Himself with our nature without the stain of original sin because that conception was not by human working but by the working of the Holy Spirit. This was not so in Mary because she came forth from the clay of Adam and not by the working of the Holy Spirit but of humanity. And because this whole body was decayed and corrupted, therefore this soul was not able to be infused in matter that was not rotted, nor was it really able to be purified except through the grace of the Holy Spirit. The body is not able to receive this grace, but the rational or intellectual spirit is. And therefore, Mary was not able to be purified of this stain until the soul was infused into her body. This was done through reverence for the Divine Word who must enter into that vessel. Therefore, just as the furnace dissolves a drop of water in a moment, so the Holy Spirit did with the stain of original sin, because after her conception, she was immediately cleansed from that sin and she was given great grace. You know, Lord, that this is true.¹⁹³

continued to be slow to accept the Immaculate Conception, even after the feast of the Conception was being celebrated liturgically, was the oath taken by Dominicans to follow the teaching of St. Thomas. In 1843, the Dominicans requested the addition of the title "Immaculata" to "et te in Conceptione" in the Preface of the Mass for December 8. See Frederick M. Jelly, O.P., "The Roman Catholic Dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception," in *The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VIII*, ed. H. George Anderson, J. Francis Stafford, Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992), 266. Reminiscent of this struggle between the two Orders is a stained glass window in the Cathedral of Covington, Kentucky, which depicts Pius IX proclaiming the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. A Franciscan stands beside the pope, while a kneeling Dominican accepts the decree from his hands.

¹⁹³ "E della substancia di Maria si vesti della natura nostra senza macula di peccato originale, perché quella concezione non fu per operazione d'uomo, ma per operazione dello Spirito santo; la quale cosa non fu così in Maria, imperciò che ella procedette della massa de Adam non per operazione di Spirito santo, ma d'uomo. E perché tutta quella massa era putrida e corrotta, però non si poteva infondere quella anima in materia non corrotta, né propriamente si poteva purgare se non per grazia di Spirito santo, la quale gracia corpo non può ricevere, ma spirito ragionevole o intellettuale; e però Maria non poté essere purgata di quella macchia se non poi che l'anima fu infusa nel corpo, la qual cosa così fu fatta per reverencia del Verbo divino el quale doveva intrare in quello vassello. Imperciò che, si come la fornace in poca d'ora consuma la gocciola de l'acqua, così fece lo Spirito santo della macchia del peccato originale, però che dopo la concezione sua subito fu mondata da quel peccato e fülle data grande gracia. Tu sai, Signore, che questa è la verità" (*Oratio XVI*, 190-192).

Catherine is proposing two arguments why Mary must have experienced original sin, at least momentarily. The first is by way of contrast with Jesus, who did not have original sin because His conception was the result of divine action. Mary's conception was the result of sexual union and thus she had original sin. In *Il Dialogo*, Catherine identifies the act of conception by the parents with the transmission of original sin, when writing of the removal of original sin through baptism: "The stain of original sin, which stain he contracted when he was conceived by his father and mother."¹⁹⁴

In so arguing, Catherine is echoing a traditional opinion on the transmission of original sin. Augustine identified the parents' concupiscence in copulation, but not copulation itself, as the cause that transmitted original sin.¹⁹⁵ Thomas follows Augustine and states his opinion in this way:

Personal sanctification...does not pass to the offspring through carnal generation because such sanctification does not pertain to the flesh but to the soul. And indeed, even if the parents of the Blessed Virgin were free from original sin, nevertheless, the blessed Virgin contracted original sin when she was conceived according to carnal concupiscence and by the joining of husband and wife: for Augustine says, all flesh born of copulation is of sin.¹⁹⁶

In affirming that the body could not receive grace until the soul was infused into the body, Catherine shows the influence of the medieval idea of animation, which posits a distinction between conception and the infusion of the rational soul. Thomas presents his argument against Mary's Immaculate Conception on the basis of animation thus: "The sanctification of the Blessed Virgin is not able to be understood before her animation for two reasons. First, because the sanctification of which we speak is being cleansed from original sin since holiness is perfect purity.... However, sin is not able to be cleansed except through grace and grace is only in

¹⁹⁴ "La macchia del peccato orriginale, la quale macchia trasse quando fu conceputo dal padre e dalla madre sua" (*Il Dialogo*, XIV, 47).

¹⁹⁵ "We do not deny, that of whatever kind of parents they are born, they are still under the devil's dominion, unless they be born again in Christ, and by his grace be removed from the power of darkness and translated into His kingdom, who willed not to be born from the same union of the two sexes...Our purpose... is to distinguish between the evil of carnal concupiscence from which sin man who is born therefrom contracts original sin, and the good of marriage." Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence* (*De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia*), I, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (First Series), vol. V, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co, 1980), 263-264.

¹⁹⁶ "Sanctificatio personalis...quae non transit in prolem carnaliter genitam: quia talis sanctificatio non respicit carnem, sed mentem. Et ideo, etsi parentes beatae Virginis fuerit mundati a peccato originali, nihilominus beata Virgo contraxit peccatum originale, cum fuerit concepta secundum carnis concupiscentiam et ex commixtione maris et feminae: dicit enim Augustinus, Omnem quae de concubitu nascitur, carnem esse peccati" (*Summa Theologiae*, III, 27, 2 ad4).

the rational creature. And so the blessed Virgin was not sanctified before the infusion of the rational soul.¹⁹⁷

Thomas posits three stages in the life of the embryo, beginning with an immediate nutritive soul, which is then assumed by a sensitive soul, and followed by the infusion of the rational soul.¹⁹⁸ Catherine may not be aware of this progression which Thomas derived both from Aristotle and thirteenth-century biology, because she appears to speak of the infusion of the intellectual soul immediately after conception. Thomas allows for a period of time so that the matter may be fittingly receptive to the form of the successive souls.

It is possible that Catherine may represent a development in the Dominican position on Mary's sanctification. The differences between Catherine and Thomas raise the question whether Catherine misunderstood the subtleties which the Dominicans had taught regarding the development of the rational soul or whether the Dominicans, by Catherine's time, had arrived at a solution that allowed for the most minimal blemish for Mary while still maintaining Thomas's position.

Thomas also posits that Mary's purification was in two stages. The first was the removal of original sin which took place in the womb, which Thomas calls her "sanctification." Following upon this, Mary was, according to Thomas, preserved from all actual sin. Nevertheless, she still had the *fomes peccati*, the inclination to sin, literally the "tinder of sin," although it was fettered in Mary's instance. This

¹⁹⁷ "Dicendum quod sanctificatio Beatae Virginis non potest intellegi ante eius animationem, duplici ratione. Primo quidem, quia sanctificatio de qua loquimur, non est nisi emundatio a peccato originali: sanctitas enim est perfecta munditia.... Culpa autem non potest emundari nisi per gratiam: cuius subjectum est sola creatura rationalis. Et ideo ante infusionem animae rationis Beata Virgo sanctificata non fuit" (*Summa Theologiae*, III, 27, 2). Thomas continues with an argument that if Mary were conceived without original sin, she would not have needed the saving action of Jesus: "Secondly, since only the rational creature is subject to fault, before the infusion of the rational soul, the offspring conceived does not have fault. And so, whatever way the Blessed Virgin would be sanctified before animation, she would never incur the fault of original sin and so she would not have needed the redemption and salvation which comes through Christ, of which Matthew says, 'He is to save His people from their sins.' However, it is not fitting that Christ would not be the Savior of all people. So it is necessary that the sanctification of the blessed Virgin was after her animation." "Secundo quia, cum sola creatura rationalis sit susceptiva culpa, ante infusionem animae rationalis proles concepta non est culpa obnoxia. Et sic, quocumque modo ante animationem beata Virgo sanctificata fuisset, nunquam incurrisset maculam originalis culpa: et ita non indignisset redemptionem et salute quae est per Christum, de quo dicitur Matt., 'Ipse salvum faciet populorum suum a peccatis eorum.' Hoc autem est inconueniens, quod Christus non sit Salvator omnium hominum. Unde relinquitur quod sanctificatio beatae Virginis fuerit post eius animationem" (*Summa Theologiae*, III, 27, 2). Catherine does not use this argument.

¹⁹⁸ "Et ideo dicendum est quod anima praexistit in embryone a principio quidem nutritiva, postmodum autem sensitiva, et tandem intellectiva" (*Summa Theologiae*, I, 118, 2 ad2).

was removed at the time of the Incarnation.¹⁹⁹ Catherine makes no mention of this twofold purification. Since Catherine takes such a decisive position on the Immaculate Conception, it would seem that she would have thoroughly discussed Thomas's position with the Dominican friars. This raises a question whether the Dominicans were softening their position somewhat in light of the growing acceptance of the feast of the Conception in the Church.

The theological controversy over the Immaculate Conception may well have influenced decisions by later editors with regard to the publication of this prayer. Girolamo Gigli was the first to attempt to collect all of Catherine's writings together. His four-volume edition containing her book, her letters, and her twenty-six prayers was published in 1707. Gigli omitted the section of *Oratio XVI* which pertains to Mary and original sin. Later publications of the prayers tended to rely on Gigli and followed this pattern. This practice continued into the twentieth century, in which two important editions of the prayers omitted the passage.²⁰⁰

This section could easily be seen as an insertion into the letter because of the sharp shift in thought in the prayer. However, such shifts are not unusual for Catherine. It is possible that Gigli accepted Catherine's authorship of the passage, but nevertheless, thought it prudent to omit the section. Certainly, as the official Church moved steadily towards the acceptance of the Immaculate Conception, Catherine's opinion must have been increasingly awkward to maintain. In 1708, within the year after Gigli's edition was published, Clement XI made the feast of the Conception of Mary a day of obligation for the universal Church. Conscious of the growing consensus on the belief, Gigli may have thought it best to delete the passage.

It is also possible that Gigli was influenced by the work of a Barnabite, Ippolito Marracci,²⁰¹ the *Vindictio S. Catharinae Senensis a Commentitia Revelatione eidem S. Catharinae Senensi adscripta contra Immaculatam Conceptionem Beatissimae Virginis Mariae*, published at Puteoli in 1663. Marracci proposes that Catherine could not have written the passage because she would have been aware of the revelations of her contemporary, St. Brigitta, on the Immaculate Conception. Marracci argues that Catherine would have known the reverence with which Gregory XI and Urban VI held Brigitta and her revelations. He notes that none of Catherine's disciples makes mention of this passage in their biographical writings.

¹⁹⁹ Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 27, 3 ad 3.

²⁰⁰ See *Pregchiere ed elevazioni*, ed. Innocenzo Taurisano, O.P. (Roma: Libreria Ferrari, 1932) and *Les Oraisons de Sainte Catherine De Sienna* (Paris: L'Art Catholique, 1919).

²⁰¹ Michael O' Carroll, C.S.Sp. refers to Marracci (1604-1675) as "Probably the most prolific writer of all time on Our Lady..." Michael O' Carroll, C.S.Sp., *Theotokos* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1982), 233.

Marracci identifies Ioannes de Neapoli as the person who inserted the passage into the text in 1496, when the Latin prayers were published with the Latin version of the *Il Dialogo* at Brescia. Marracci is of the opinion that Catherine's words were given the tone of a revelation purposely to contradict the revelations given to St. Brigitta.²⁰²

Prospero Lambertini, later Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758), in his *De Servorum Dei Beatificatione et Beatorum Canonizatione*,²⁰³ supports the suspicion that someone else added the words on the Immaculate Conception to Catherine's prayer on the grounds that Raimondo makes no mention of such a revelation. Lambertini quotes a theologian, Nicholas Lancizzi, stating that if Catherine were the actual author then these words were not from God but from her own spirit, manifesting the influence of the Dominicans. He observes that pious persons often speak from their own senses or imaginations even when they are abstracted in prayer.²⁰⁴

Giuliana Cavallini restored the section in her critical edition of *Le Orazioni*. She points out that Marracci provides no information on Ioannes de Neapoli or on his works. More importantly, as Cavallini notes, the section is found in the early textual manuscripts, long before 1496, although Marracci may not have been aware of that. Cavallini does not consider that Catherine's manner of speaking in this section necessarily implies that Catherine thought these words were a divine revelation. Rather, the mode of expression should be seen as an example of the dogmatic tone which Catherine often assumed in her writings.²⁰⁵ It is likely that the passage is authentic and represents Catherine's opinion, which, although acceptable at the time, demonstrates that holiness does not necessarily imply inerrancy, as Lambertini had noted.

Even though Catherine does not accept the Immaculate Conception, she does perceive Mary as the one who has been given supreme holiness. This gift of holiness

²⁰² P. Hippolyto Marraccio Lucensi, *Vindictio S. Catharinae Senensis a Commentitia Revelatione eidem S. Catharinae Senensi adscripta contra Immaculatam Conceptionem Beatissimae Virginis Mariae* (Puteoli: Haredum Caualli, 1663). This rare book may be found in the collection of the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC.

²⁰³ Lambertini, in his curial position in charge of canonizations, composed *De Servorum Dei Beatificatione et Beatorum Canonizatione* as an exhaustive study of the Church's process of determining saintliness.

²⁰⁴ "Si vere oratio illa fuit facta a Sancta Catharina, dico eam dixesse non Deo revelante, sed ex proprio spiritu et sensu, tamquam quae fuit filia spiritualis Patrum Dominicanorum, a quibus hanc sententiam edocta fuerat. Sciendum autem est, quandam personae aliquae pie abstracta a sensibus aliquid loquuntur, saepe eas loqui ex proprio sensu, et aliquando hallucinari." Prosper De Lambertini, *De Servorum Dei Beatificatione, et Beatorum Canonizatione* (Prati: Alber Ghettus et Soc., 1829), 612.

²⁰⁵ Caterina da Siena, *Le Orazioni*, ed. Giuliana Cavallini (Roma: Edizioni Catheriniane, 1978), 185-186.

was "through reverence for the Divine Word who must enter into that vessel."²⁰⁶ The connection that Catherine makes between Mary's purity and the Incarnation echoes Augustine's insistence that there should be no question of sin in Mary out of respect for the one whom she merited to conceive and bear.²⁰⁷ Catherine would have been exposed to this opinion of Augustine through homilies and through her conversations with her priest disciples.

Catherine seeks to preserve Mary's purity while admitting the universally inherited flaw. She specifies that Mary's purity is a gift, given in deference to Jesus. Mary's experience of original sin is as slight as possible. It was a momentary touch which Catherine compares to a drop of water in the furnace which is the Holy Spirit. After her conception, Mary "was immediately cleansed from that sin and she was given great grace."²⁰⁸ Catherine perceives the gratuity of the purification and of the "great grace," given to Mary not as earned but as given by God.

Mary in the Life of the Believer

In this third section, we will examine Catherine's teachings on Mary's role in the life of the believer. In her teachings, Catherine uses Mary as an example of the virtues which she considers necessary for following Christ. Throughout her writings, Catherine also manifests a confidence in Mary's help in following Christ. This confidence is illustrated by examples from Catherine's experiences. The concluding portion of this section will show how Mary especially aids those who share her Son's work of salvation. In Catherine's perception, the mature disciple is an "eater and taster of souls," one who actively seeks the salvation of others.

Mary as a Model of the Virtues in Following Christ

Throughout Catherine's writings, there is an emphasis on the virtues. Even while stressing the power of the blood of Jesus, Catherine is emphatic that one's personal salvation demands cooperation with God's grace. She insists that individu-

²⁰⁶ "La qual cosa cosi fu fatta per reverencia del Verbo divino el quale doveva intrare in quello vassello" (*Oratio XVI*, 192).

²⁰⁷ "Excepta itaque sancta virgine Maria, de qua propter honorem Domini nullam prorsus cum de peccatis agitur, haberi volo quaestionem: unde enim scimus quid ei plus gratiae collatum fuerit ad vincendum omni ex parte peccatum, quae concipere ac parere meruit, quem constat nullum habuisse peccatum?" St. Augustine, *De natura et gratia*, xxxvi; PL 44, 267. Luigi Gambero is convinced that Augustine is only referring to personal sin and not to original sin. He considers such an interpretation to be in accord with the totality of Augustine's theology. See, Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, trans. Thomas Buffer (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1999), 226

²⁰⁸ "Doppo la concezione sua subito fu mondata da quel peccato e fulle data grande gracia" (*Oratio XVI*, 192).

als must respond to the generosity of God: "It [virtue] pays the debt to which we are obliged, that is, to render to God the debt of love, which love one renders and shows with the means of the virtues."²⁰⁹

In *Il Dialogo*, Catherine presents specific virtues and demonstrates their relationship to each other: charity, humility, self-knowledge, patience, poverty of spirit, and acceptance of the will of God. In her prayers and letters, Catherine identifies Mary as one who epitomizes these same virtues. Mary models the virtues that are needed in order to follow Christ. For example, in *Il Dialogo*, Catherine reflects on the correlation between humility and self-knowledge. Virtue has no life without charity but humility is the wet nurse of charity, even as humility is grounded in self-knowledge.²¹⁰ In her prayer on the day of the Annunciation, Catherine associates God's choice of Mary with her humility rooted in self-knowledge:

O Mary, vessel of humility, in this vessel abides and burns the light of true knowledge. With this light you rose above yourself. And as you were pleasing to the eternal Father, so He grasped you and drew you to Himself, loving you with a special love. With this light and the fire of your charity and with the oil of your humility, you drew and bent His divinity to come into you, although He was already drawn by the most blazing fire of His inestimable charity to come to us.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ "Ella paga il debito al quale siamo obligati, cioè di rendere a Dio il debito dell'amore, il quale amore se gli rende e dimostra col mezzo della virtù" (Letter 345, V, 157). This letter was sent to Countess Giovanna di Mileto. Noffke suggests that this letter may have been written between September 15 and November 15, 1379.

²¹⁰ "No virtue is able to have in itself life except from charity, and humility is the wet nurse and nurturer of charity. In the knowledge of yourself you will humble yourself, seeing yourself as not existing through yourself, and you will know that your being is from me, for I have loved you before you were." "Niuna virtù può avere in sè vita se non dalla carità; e l'umiltà è balia e nutrice della carità. Nel cognoscimento di te ti umilierai, vedendo te per te non essere, e l'essere tuo conoscerai da me, che v'ò amati prima che voi fuste" (*Il Dialogo*, IV, 10).

²¹¹ "O Maria vassello d'umiltà nel quale vassello sta e arde el lume del vero cognoscimento, col quale tu levasti te sopra di te, e però piacesti al Padre eterno, unde egli ti rapì e trasse a sé amandoti di singulare amore. Con questo lume e fuoco della tua carità e con l'olio della tua umiltà traesti tu e inchinasti la divinità sua a venire in te, benché prima fu tratto da l'ardentissimo fuoco della sua inestimabile carità a venire a noi" (*Oratio* XI, 120). In her advice to her niece, Nanna, Catherine draws upon the parable of the ten virgins, comparing the heart to a lamp, humility to oil, and faith to the light: "It is necessary for us then that one be mixed together with the other, that is to stay in the holy knowledge of the goodness of God and in the knowledge of ourselves, and so we will be humble, patient, and meek and by this way we will have the oil in the lamp. It is necessary for us now that there may be light for us; otherwise it would not be enough. He wishes this light to be the light of the most holy faith." "Convienci dunque che sia mescolato l'uno coll'altro insieme, cioè stare nel cognoscimento santo della bontà di Dio, e nel cognoscimento di noi medesimi: e così saremo umili, pazienti e mansueti; e a questo modo averemo l'olio nella lampana. Convienci ora che ci sia il lume: altrimenti, non basterebbe. Questo lume vuol essere il lume della santissima fede" (Letter 23, I, 76). Noffke places this letter in October 1377 or shortly afterwards.

Catherine asserts that Mary's humility made her the suitable collaborator with God in the Incarnation: "True and perfect humility...is that small virtue which makes us great in the gentle sight of God. It is that virtue which constrained and bound God to make incarnate His sweetest Son in the womb of Mary."²¹²

In light of such language, it might seem that Catherine is affirming that Mary, in some way, earned God's favor. In responding to the question whether merit preceded the Incarnation, Thomas makes the distinction between condign merit, in which there is a proportion between an action and a reward, and congruous merit, in which there is a certain fittingness to the reward based on the relationship between the one who acts and the one rewarding. Thomas states that good deeds could never merit the Incarnation condignly. As grace, the principle of merit, cannot be merited, so the Incarnation, the principle of grace, could not be merited. Yet congruously, it was fitting that God should respond to the holy people of the Old Testament because of their desire, prayers, and obedience.²¹³ Thomas asserts that Mary, by the grace given her, merited a degree of purity and holiness that fitted her to be the Mother of God.²¹⁴

Bonaventure makes a similar distinction, affirming that before the Incarnation, Mary merited congruously by her purity, humility, and kindness. After the Annunciation, by virtue of the grace bestowed upon her when the Holy Spirit descended upon her, she not only merited congruously but also had the dignity to be overshadowed and made pregnant by the power of the Most High.²¹⁵

Without using the theological distinctions, Catherine is aware that Mary's unique situation is the result of grace. The special graces that Mary received immediately upon the animation of her soul, referred to in *Oratio XVI*, illustrate that Mary was especially preserved and prepared for her role as Christ's mother by the sheer grace of God. God's delight in Mary's graced soul reflects both God's initiative and Mary's response. Mary's humility "constrained and bound God" in the sense

²¹² "Vera e perfetta umiltà...è quella virtù piccola che ci fa grandi nel cospetto dolce di Dio. Ella è quella virtù che costrinse e inchiodò Dio a fare incarnare il Figliuolo dolcissimo suo nel ventre di Maria" (Letter 174, III, 84). Noffke suggests that the letter was written between August 20 and 31, 1378. This letter was written to her friend, Monna Agnesa, the tailor's wife in Florence.

²¹³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 2, 11.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 2, 11, ad3.

²¹⁵ "Beata Virgo Maria concipere Filium Dei ante incarnationem meruit merito congrui, quoniam prae sua nimia puritate et humilitate et benignitate idonea erat, ut efficeretur Dei Mater. Post annunciationem vero, postquam consensit, et Spiritus sanctus in copiositate gratiae in eam descendit, non solum habuit congruitatem, sed dignitatem; et ex tunc meruit non solum merito congruitatis, sed dignitatis obumbrari et impraegnari virtute Altissimi." Bonaventure, *S. Bonaventurae Commentaria In Quatuor Libros Sententiarum*, III, d. 4, a. 2, q. 2, in *S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia*, vol. III (Ad Claras Aquas: Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1887), 107.

that her virtuous response to God allowed God to bestow the greatest graces and even the gift of the Son upon her.

Another virtue which Catherine considers to be most important is patience. Writing to Raimondo, Catherine instructs him on the need for patience, which she refers to as the "marrow of charity." She explains that this virtue is found in the cell of knowledge of self and of the goodness of God. Catherine concludes this passage by urging Raimondo: "Remember, dearest father and negligent son, the teaching of Mary, and of that of Gentle First Truth."²¹⁶ Since no mention of Mary has preceded this reference in the letter and since Catherine does not in any other place refer to a particular "teaching of Mary," it appears that the "teaching of Mary" with regard to virtue is Mary's example of living these truths.

Catherine assumes that Raimondo knows what the "teaching of Mary" is because of some common understanding between them. Raimondo was known to be particularly devoted to Mary. In his testimony for the *Processus*, Frater Thomas Paruta witnesses to this:

Father Raimondo, general of this Order, was most devoted to the most Blessed Virgin Mary. For this reason, he sang the Mass on her celebrations and during the Mass, he preached to the people in their language. And as I always heard in his preaching, he included some miracle of the Virgin and beyond the customary Office of the Virgin, daily, he added special praises for her. So he compiled the Office of the Visitation which the Order of Preachers used, and also he wrote about the Magnificat out of reverence for the Virgin Mother of God.²¹⁷

Catherine refers to Mary in more of her letters to Raimondo than in her letters to others. One can only speculate why this is so. Did Catherine appeal to Mary's example with Raimondo because she was aware of his devotion to Mary? Or did

²¹⁶ "Ricordivi, carissimo padre e negligente figliuolo, della dottrina di Maria, e di quella della dolce prima Verità" (Letter 104, II, 139). Noffke places this letter between November and December 1377. For the full text see Appendix, note 10.

²¹⁷ "Raimundus pater, tanti ordinis generalis, fuit beatissime Marie virginis devotissimus, unde et in eius celebritatibus missam cantabat et interdum in vulgari populo predicabat. Et prout audiui semper in suis predicationibus aliquod miraculum Virginis inserebat ac cotidie preter officium Virginis consuetum peculiaribus eius laudibus insistebat, unde et officium Visitationis, quo ordo Predicatorum utitur, compilavit ac etiam super Magnificat ob reverentiam Dei Matris et Virginis scripsit." "Testimony of Fr. Thomas Paruta," *Processus*, 417-418. Tommaso Paruta was a Dominican, who was born in Venice around 1380. He made his profession in the Order in 1395 at Venice. He studied at Oxford and Paris. His knowledge of Catherine was from Stefano Maconi and other Carthusians, as well as his fellow Dominicans, Raimondo da Capua, Tommaso da Siena, and Bartolomeo Dominicini. The commentary on the Magnificat, to which Paruta refers, has been lost. However, a letter from Raimondo to the Archbishop of Prague, Johannes de Jenstein, congratulating him on the introduction of the Feast of the Visitation into his archdiocese has been preserved. See Vladimír Kundelka, "Raimund von Capua und Böhmen," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 30 (1960): 222-226.

Catherine feel a certain ease in this shared Marian bond with Raimondo who came closest to being her peer and friend, as well as being her spiritual father and disciple? To what degree was Raimondo's affection for Mary fostered by Catherine? Or did her director's affection for Mary encourage the devotion Catherine had demonstrated from her youth? Perhaps, as is often the case in relationships of many aspects, there is some truth in each of these possibilities.

Catherine's letters to other individuals, as well, show that she considered Mary to be the model of the virtues needed to follow Christ. Trying to dissuade Monna Colomba, a widow in Lucca, from her worldly life, Catherine illustrates a lesson through the Gospel account of the loss of the child Jesus in the temple. According to Catherine, those who seek to find God but remain in worldly distractions lose Him. Mary did not find Jesus at the feast but in the temple. Mary teaches those who have lost Christ through preoccupation with the will of others to find Him again in the temple of the soul:

Since this is the reason that has made us lose God through grace, is there a way for us to find Him again? Yes, for us to accompany Mary and seek Him with her, that is, with bitterness, sorrow, and displeasure for the sins committed against our Creator by condescending to the will of creatures. It is necessary for us then to go to the temple and there He is found. Let us lift up our hearts and our affections and our desire with this company of bitterness, and go to the temple of our soul, and there we know ourselves. Then, knowing ourselves not to have being of ourselves, we will know the goodness of God in ourselves, Who is that One who is.²¹⁸

To "accompany Mary" and to "seek Him [Christ] with her" requires one to go into the temple of the soul. As has been seen, Catherine believes that self-knowledge is fundamental for one's relationship to God. In the "cell of self-knowledge" one becomes more aware of one's human weakness. In that consciousness of self and God, one also realizes the gratuity of God's goodness demonstrated by the gift of being, and every good thing that follows upon being, particularly the blood shed for love on the cross. Thus the "bitterness" one experiences by being more cognizant of one's sins is always in the context of the realization of "the goodness of God in ourselves," found in the cell of self-knowledge. One who seeks Jesus through self-knowledge accompanies Mary by imitating her reflective life.

²¹⁸ "Poi che questa è la cagione che ci à fatto smarrire Dio per gratia, ecci modo di ritrovarlo? si: acompagnarci con Maria e cerchiallo con lei, cioè con l'amaritudine, dolore e dispiacimento della colpa commessa contra al nostro creatore per consendere alla volontà delle creature. Convienci dunque andare al tempio, ed ine si truova. Levisi el cuore e l'affetto e 'l desiderio nostro con questa compagnia dell'amaritudine, e vada al tempio dell'anima sua, e ine cognosca sè medesima. Allora, cognoscendo sè medesima non essere, cognoscerà la bontà di Dio in sè, che è colui che è" (Letter 166, III, 48-49). Noffke proposes a date for this letter between October 1375 and January 1376. For the fuller passage see Appendix, note 11.

Catherine considers voluntary poverty²¹⁹ to be an important element in imitating Jesus. In impressing upon her readers the extent of His poverty, she makes mention of Mary. On two occasions, in describing Jesus' poverty she changes Matthew 8:20 so that Jesus is "the Son of the Virgin" rather than "The Son of Man." In *Il Dialogo*, she writes: "The Son of the Virgin has nowhere to lay His head."²²⁰ In her letter to Giovanni Trenta and his wife, Giovanna, she uses this expression to describe Jesus' poverty on the cross: "The Son of the Virgin does not have anywhere to repose His head."²²¹ Domenico Cavalca uses the same expression, "The Son of the Virgin did not have a place to lay his head."²²² Consciously or unconsciously, Catherine associates Mary with Jesus' poverty.

In recounting Jesus' poverty in His birth, Catherine reminds us that Mary shared this poverty. She asserts: "He is so poor that Mary did not have a blanket with which to wrap her son."²²³ She urges nuns to follow Jesus' poverty: "And in His nativity, sweet Mary did not have such a little cloth to be able to wrap her Son."²²⁴ Catherine may have received this idea from Domenico Cavalca who makes a similar statement: "When He was born, the virgin Mary was on the road, and was so poor and poorly dressed, that she did not have anything with which to clothe Him."²²⁵ This idea of such extreme poverty contradicts Luke 2:7 which specifies that Mary wrapped the child in a swaddling cloth. Catherine has become so intent

²¹⁹ Catherine almost always emphasises the freely chosen aspect of poverty by the adjective "voluntary," thus, "Povertà volontaria."

²²⁰ "Il Figliuolo della Vergine non à dove posare il capo suo" (*Il Dialogo*, CLI, 510).

²²¹ "Il Figliuolo della Vergine non à dove elli riposi il capo suo" (Letter 152, II, 311).

²²² Cavalca, *Lo Specchio della Croce*, 132.

²²³ "Egli è mendico in tanto che Maria non ebbe panno dove involgere il figliuolo suo" (Letter 29, I, 104). This letter was written to Regina Della Scala. Noffke suggests that this letter was written between Advent, 1375 and early 1376. In a similar way, Catherine refers to this example of Jesus' poverty in her letter to Giovanni Trenta and to his wife Giovanna, in Lucca: "He chose poverty in His nativity for our example and rule, so extreme that He did not have a blanket to be wrapped in, while, the weather being cold, the animals breathed on the body of the baby." "Elesse per nostro essemplio e regola nella natività sua la povertà, tanto strema che non ebbe pannicello due invollare, intanto che, essendo tempo di freddo, l'animale aciava sopra el corpo del fanciullo" (Letter 152, II, 310-311). Noffke places this letter between late December 1375 and very early January 1376.

²²⁴ "E nella sua natività, Maria dolce non ebbe tanto panicello che lo potesse involgiare el suo Figliuolo" (Letter 75, II, 13). This letter was sent to the Nuns of San Gaggio near Florence and to the Nuns of Monte San Savino. Noffke asserts that this letter was written in or around October 1377. In *Il Dialogo*, Catherine compares Jesus' coming in the "womb of the Virgin" to His coming in judgment: "He will not come as a poor baby, as when He was born, coming into the womb of the Virgin and being born in the stable among the animals, and then dying between two thieves." "Egli non verrà come poverello, si come quando egli nacque, venendo nel ventre della Vergine e nascendo nella stalla fra gli animali, e poi morendo in mezzo fra due ladroni" (*Il Dialogo*, XXXIX, 99).

²²⁵ Cavalca, *Lo Specchio della Croce*, 132.

on a Gospel principle which she wishes to communicate, that she has become oblivious to the actual details of the Gospel. Her concern is to emphasize the freely chosen poverty of the Son of God, shared by His mother.

Jesus' and Mary's poverty is, according to Catherine, the paradigm for spiritual poverty, founded, as Catherine often says, in self-knowledge. One must imitate Mary in bringing Jesus to birth in the stable of self-knowledge, as *Il Dialogo* tells us:

And if you want to see Him humbled and in great poverty, consider God made man, clothed with the lowliness of your humanity. You see this gentle and loving Word born in a stable, when Mary was on a journey, to show you who are on the way, that you ought always to be reborn in the stable of knowledge of yourselves, where you will find Me born through grace within your soul. You see Him staying there among the animals, in such poverty that Mary had nothing with which to cover Him. But the weather being cold, she warmed Him with the breath of the animals and by covering Him with hay.²²⁶

Poverty of spirit is found in self-knowledge, where Christ is reborn in the soul just as Jesus was born of Mary in poverty. In a parallel quotation, Catherine encourages the painter, Andrea di Vanni, to place himself spiritually during Advent in the crèche, where he will find Mary:

And I urge you as much as I know and I am able, and I beg you that you find yourself in this holy Advent and in the holy Passover, in the crèche with this sweet and humble Lamb, where you will find Mary with such reverence to that Son, and a pilgrim in such poverty, having the wealth of the Son of God. For she does not have a cloth sufficient to be able to wrap Him, nor a fire to warm fire itself, the immaculate Lamb. But even the animals warmed Him with their breath upon the body of the little boy.²²⁷

Mary who shares her Son's poverty, teaches other pilgrims both poverty of spirit and an appreciation of the wealth they possess in the Son of God.

²²⁶ "E se tu il vuoi vedere umiliato e in grande povertà, riguarda Dio essere fatto uomo, vestito della viltà de l'umanità vostra. Tu vedi questo dolce e amoroso Verbo nascere in una stalla, essendo Maria in camino, per mostrare a voi viandanti che voi dovete sempre rinascere nella stalla del cognoscimento di voi, dove troverete nato me, per grazia, dentro ne l'anima vostra. Tu il vedi stare ine in mezzo degli animali, in tanta povertà che Maria non à con che ricoprirlo. Ma essendo tempo di freddo, col fiato de l'animale, e col fieno ricoprendolo, si riscaldava" (*Il Dialogo*, CLI, 509). The change in person, "nato *me*," although awkward, is in the text.

²²⁷ "E io ve ne stringo quanto so e posso; e pregovi che vi ritroviate in questo dolce avvento e nella santa Pasqua, nel presepio con questo dolce e umile Agnello, dove troverete Maria con tanta riverenza a quel figliuolo, e peregrina in tanta povertà, avendo la ricchezza del Figliuolo di Dio; che non à panno da poterlo invòllere; nè fuoco da scaldare esso fuoco, Agnello immacolato: ma gli animali eziandio, sopra il corpo del fanciullo, el riscaldavano col fiato loro" (Letter 363, V, 247). Noffke places this letter between November 27 and December 20, 1379.

With her assurance that God's purpose is always to draw us to Himself, Catherine is convinced that God's goodness is at work even in the most tragic experiences. She urges Monna Agnese Malavolti, who had lost two adult children through death, to find her peace in the mystery of God's will. For Catherine, this difficult act of acceptance could only come from a humble surrender to the unfathomable plans of God, founded on the conviction that God is good and His plans are loving. Catherine appeals to Mary as the model of this humble acceptance of God's plans:

Pride displeases Him and humility pleases Him. And He was so pleased with the virtue of humility of Mary, that He was constrained through His goodness to give to her the Word, His only-begotten Son, and she was that sweet mother who gave Him to us. You certainly know, that as long as Mary had not showed with the sound of her word her humility and her will saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Your word," the Son of God was not made incarnate in her, but when she had said it, she conceived in herself that sweet and immaculate Lamb, showing to us in this the first sweet Truth, how excellent is this small virtue, and how much the soul receives who with humility offers and gives her will to the Creator.... In all these things, I say, the soul perfected with humility says "My Lord, behold your handmaid." Let it be done to me according to your will, and not according to what I want in my feelings.²²⁸

Mary's humility causes her to submit herself to God's will. According to Catherine, whatever the circumstances, there is good in God's will and the believer will find her or his good in conformity with that will.

In other situations, Catherine maintains that, as good as works of penance may be, even they are not the foundation for serving God. The foundation is conformity with God's will: "It is necessary for you then to make the foundation in killing and drowning your self-will. And with this will subjected to My will you will give Me sweet, hungry, and infinite desire, seeking My honor and the salvation of souls."²²⁹

²²⁸ "Dispiacegli la superbia, e piacegli l'umiltà. E in tanto gli piacque la virtù dell'umiltà di Maria, che fu costretto per la bontà sua di donare a lei il Verbo dall'unigenito suo figliuolo; ed ella fu quella dolce Madre che el donò a noi. Sapete bene, che infino che Maria non mostrò col suono della parola l'umiltà e la volontà sua, dicendi: 'Ecce Ancilla Domini; sia fatto a me secondo la parola tua'; il figliuolo di Dio non incarnò in lei; ma, detta che ella l'ebbe, concepette in sè quello dolce e immacolato Agnello, mostrando in questo a noi la prima dolce Verità, quanto è eccellente questa virtù piccola, e quanto riceve l'anima che con umiltà offera e dona la volontà sua al Creatore.... In tutte queste cose, dico che l'anima perfetta con umiltà dice: 'Signore mio, ecco l'Ancilla tua. Sia fatto in me secondo la tua volontà, e non secondo quello che voglio io sensitivamente'" (Letter 38, I, 153-154). Noffke suggests that this letter was written in October 1377. Monna Agnese, was the wife of Orso Malavolti. Her son had been beheaded in 1372. Catherine wrote to her after the death of her daughter. For a more complete reading of this passage, see Appendix, note 12.

²²⁹ "Convienvi dunque fare il fondamento in uccidere e annegare la propria volontà, e con essa volontà sottoposta alla volontà mia mi daretè dolce, affamato e infinito desiderio, cercando l'onore di me e la salute de l'anime" (*Il Dialogo*, CIV, 292). St. Teresa of Avila, who was declared a Doctor of

Mary, who says "Let it be done to me according to Your will," is "the soul perfected in humility." Mary is the model of those who accept God's will in their lives with humility. Catherine instructs her mother to learn this conformity from Mary. She writes: "Now from her, I wish that you may learn, dearest mother. You know that it is necessary for me to follow the will of God and I know that you wish that I follow it."²³⁰ Those who accept the will of God in their lives imitate Mary.

Thus, as the one who let the Word of God be done within her, Mary is model and teacher of the virtues to others. She personifies the virtues which Catherine considers to be essential for those who want to cooperate with God's action within them, especially charity, humility, patience, self-knowledge, voluntary poverty, poverty of spirit, and surrender to the will of God.

Mary Aids Believers in Cooperating with Their Salvation

Having died to reconcile humanity with his Father, Jesus teaches us how to respond to His action in our souls by the works of virtue.²³¹ While Catherine insists that even one's cooperation through virtue depends on Christ,²³² she also maintains that we, as followers of Christ, have the obligation to cooperate with our own salvation by living as Christ has taught us.²³³ Catherine often repeats what she states

the Church with Catherine, also insists in the conformity of the will to God as the destination of the spiritual life: "The whole aim of any person who is beginning prayer...should be that he work and prepare himself with determination and every possible effort to bring his will into conformity with God's will. Be certain that...the greatest perfection attainable along the spiritual path lies in this conformity." Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. 2, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1980), 301. Teresa insists that surrender to God's will is essential to the spiritual life: "Believe me the whole affair does not lie in whether or not we wear the religious habit but in striving to practice the virtues, in surrendering our will to God in everything, in bringing our life into accordance with what His Majesty ordains for it, and in desiring that His will not ours be done." *Ibid.*, 311.

²³⁰ "Ora da lei voglio che impariate, carissima madre. Voi sapete che a me conviene seguitare la volontà di Dio; e io so che voi volete ch'io la sèguiti" (Letter 240, IV, 32).

²³¹ "I say that He taught the way of love and the teaching of virtue. He showed us in what way we ought to love, if we wish to have life." "Dico che c'insegnò la via dell'amore e la dottrina della virtù. Egli ci mostrò in che modo noi doviamo amare, a volere avere la vita" (Letter 35, I, 132). This letter was sent to monks at the monastery of Monte Oliveto.

²³² "From Him all the virtues have life. And so no one is able to have virtue that gives the life of grace unless from Him, that is, following His footsteps and His teaching. He has perfected the virtues." "[D]a lui ànno vita tutte le virtù. E però niuno e può avere virtù che dia vita di grazia se non da lui, ciò è seguitando le vestigie e la dottrina sua. Egli à maturate le virtù" (*Il Dialogo*, XXVII, 73).

²³³ "He [Christ] wishes that we apply our wills, with a free choice employing the time in the exercise of the true virtues." "Ma vuole che noi ci mettiamo la volontà libera, col libero arbitrio esercitando il tempo con le vere virtù" (*Il Dialogo*, XXIII, 62).

in her prayer on the Annunciation: "Although He made you without you, you will not be saved without yourself."²³⁴

Catherine believes that Mary has an important role in aiding believers, as they attempt to live virtuously and so cooperate with the power of the blood in their lives. When Raimondo was in Pisa, Catherine wrote to him detailing her involvement with a young Perugian whose conversion Catherine brought about while he was in prison awaiting execution for a political crime. This man is thought to have been Niccolò di Toldo, although Catherine does not refer to him by name. The man had resisted the sacraments until Catherine approached him. Not only was he reconciled with the Church, but he requested that Catherine hold his head as he was beheaded. In her description of the moments preceding the execution, Catherine recounts that she especially invoked Mary's care for the young man and also sought the grace of martyrdom for herself:

I waited for him at the place of justice and I waited there with continual prayer and the presence of Mary and of Catherine, virgin and martyr. Before he arrived, I prostrated myself, and extended my neck upon the block. But the desire that had filled me upon there did not come about for me. I prayed and constrained Mary for I wanted this grace, that, on that moment, she might give him a light and peace of heart, and then she might see him turn to his end.²³⁵

Catherine prays that Mary will give the man "light and peace of heart" as he is executed. She prays that Mary will guide him to "his end." In the course of the letter, Catherine records that, as the man is beheaded, she saw Jesus appear and receive the man's blood in His own blood, and place the man's soul in His side.²³⁶ This is the end for which Catherine prayed to Mary, that this man might be given union with Christ through His saving blood.

²³⁴ "Benché tu sia fatta senza te non sarai salvata senza te" (*Oratio* XI, 128).

²³⁵ "Aspettalo al luogo della giustizia e aspettai in con continua oratione e presentia di Maria e di Caterina vergine e martire. Prima che giognesse elli, posimi giù, e distesi el collo in sul ceppo; ma non mi venne fatto che io avessi l'affetto pieno di me in su. Pregai e constrinsi Maria che io voleva questa grazia, che in su quello punto gli desse uno lume e pace di cuore, e poi el vedesse tornare al fine suo" (Letter 273, IV, 176). Noffke considers this letter to be written shortly after June 13, 1375.

²³⁶ "Then the God and Man was seen, as is seen the clarity of the sun. And He was opened and received the blood in His blood. He received a fire of holy desire, given and hidden in his soul through grace into the fire of His divine charity. After he had received his blood and his desire, and He received his soul, He put it into the open storehouse of His side, full of mercy, the First Truth showing that He received him only through grace and mercy, and not for any other work." "Allora si vedeva Dio e Uomo, come si vedesse la chiarezza del sole, e stava aperto, e riceveva sangue nel sangue suo: uno fuoco di desiderio santo, dato e nascosto nell'anima sua per gratia, riceveva nel fuoco della divina sua carità. Poi che ebbe ricevuto el sangue e 'l desiderio suo, ed egli ricevette l'anima sua, e la misse nella bottiga aperta del costato suo, pieno di misericordia, manifestando la prima verità che per sola gratia e misericordia egli el riceveva, e non per veruna altra operatione" (Letter 273, IV, 177).

In his testimony for the *Processus*, Pietro di Giovanni Venture, who had been one of Catherine's young Sieneſe diſciples, deſcribes Catherine's interceſſion to Mary on his own behalf: "I, Pietro, ſaid to her, 'Mother, I aſk you, for the love of God, that on this night you may remember me, ſo that I may have ſome conſolation in the Lord.' And that one reſponded, ſaying, 'I will aſk the virgin Mary about it.' And behold on the following night, ſhe appeared to me in a viſion and communicated a hoſt to me, having with her two Olivetan monks."²³⁷ This pattern of Mary bringing Jeſus or Mary bringing individuals to Jeſus occurs frequently in ſuch inſtances connected with Catherine.

Catherine communicates her confidence in Mary to her diſciples. During her ſtay at Rocca d'Orcia, ſhe writes to her mother, aſking for prayers to Mary: "Let all pray to God and to that glorious Virgin that He may ſend us an effect which may be good."²³⁸ Catherine expreſſes to Raimondo, as well, her truſt in Mary: "And therefore I have told you that I deſired to ſee you with true and perfect ſolicitude. I have hope in that ſweet mother Mary, that ſhe will fulfill my deſire."²³⁹

According to Catherine, the virtues are developed by ſtruggling with their contraries through interior and external trials.²⁴⁰ Catherine is confident that Mary aſſiſts believers in theſe ſtruggles. Informing Raimondo about the violence that occurred in Florence, ſhe recalls the urgent pleaſ ſhe and her followers made to Mary: "But concerning the great evil, God, who does not deſpiſe the deſire of His ſervants, and that ſweet mother Mary, whoſe name was invoked with painful, ſorrowful, and loving deſires, provided, we can almoſt ſay, that in the noiſe and in the

²³⁷ "Ego Petrus dixi ſibi: 'Mater, ego rogo vos amore Dei quod in iſta nocte ſitis memor mei, ita quod ego habeam aliquod in Domino ſolatum.' Et illa tunc mihi reſpondid dicens: 'Ego ſuper id rogabo virginem Mariam.' Et ecce quod in nocte ſequenti mihi apparuit in viſione meque cum una hoſtia communicavit, habens ſecum duos fratres de *Monte Oliveto*." "Depoſition of Petrus Johannis Venture," *Processus*, 426.

²³⁸ "E però ne preghiate tutti Dio, e codesta Vergine gloriosa, che ci mandi effetto che ſia buono" (Letter 117, 185-186). Noffke locates this letter in late September 1377, when Catherine was ſtaying in Rocca d'Orcia, about twenty-three miles from Siena among the foothills of Monte Amiata.

²³⁹ "E però vi diſſi ch'io deſideravo di vedervi con vera e perfetta ſolicitudine. Ho ſperanza in quella dolce madre Maria, che adempirà il deſiderio mio" (Letter 104, II, 139-140). Noffke places this letter between November and December 1377.

²⁴⁰ "And I permit it through love and not through hatred that you may conquer and not be conquered, and that you may come to a perfect knowledge of Me and of yourselves and in order that your virtue may be proved becauſe it is not proved except through its contrary." "Ed Io el permetto per amore e non per odio, perchè vinciate e non ſiate vinti, e perchè veniate a perfetto cognoſcimento di me e di voi e acciò che la virtù ſia provata, però che ella non ſi pruova ſe non per lo ſuo contrario" (*Il Dialogo*, XL, 110-111).

great confusion which there was, there were no human deaths outside of those which justice did."²⁴¹

Catherine acknowledges God's help in preserving herself and her followers during the uprising but she also specifically gives credit to Mary for this favor. By an instinct of faith, Catherine and her followers had particularly sought Mary's help in the intensity of the struggle. In a similar way, she credits Mary for restoring the Roman papal fortress, Castel Sant' Angelo, to Urban VI: "I rejoice that this most gentle mother Mary and gentle Peter, prince of the Apostles, have restored you in your place."²⁴²

Catherine believes that Mary can help individuals receive the particular graces they need to grow as those being redeemed. In her prayer on the Annunciation, Catherine prays to Mary for the needs of the Church and of the pope: "I turn to you, Mary, and to you I offer my petition for the sweet bride of Christ, your most gentle Son, and for His vicar on the earth. May he be given light so that with discernment he may take the necessary way for the reform of holy Church. Then, unify the people and conform the heart of the people with him, so that they may never rise against their head."²⁴³

Catherine attributes to Mary the ability to guide individuals to know how to serve God. As she deliberates whether to go to Naples to plead the pope's cause with Queen Giovanna, Catherine asks Raimondo: "Pray and have others beg God and Mary that He make us do that which is for His honor."²⁴⁴ In *Il Dialogo*, she describes St. Agnes of Montepulciano's reliance on providence when she attempted to create a monastery in a converted brothel, under Mary's instructions: "So she, a

²⁴¹ "Ma del grande male, Dio, che non dispregia il desiderio de' servi suoi, e quella dolce madre Maria, il cui nome era invocato con penosi, dolorosi e amorosi desiderii provide che, nel romore e nella grande mutazione che fu, non c'ebbe quasi diciamo di morte d'uomini, di fuore da quelli che fece la giustizia" (Letter 295, IV, 241). Noffke suggests that this letter was written on either July 2 or 3, 1378.

²⁴² "Godo che questa dolcissima madre Maria, e Pietro dolce, principe degli Apostoli, v'à rimesso nel luogo vostro" (Letter 351, V, 190). After the Castel Sant'Angelo had been retaken and a Clementine army on its way to Rome had been defeated, Urban VI walked barefoot in a procession of thanksgiving from Santa Maria in Trastevere to Saint Peter's. Noffke places this letter on May 30, 1379.

²⁴³ "A te ricorro, Maria, e a te offero la petizione mia per la dolce sposa di Cristo dolcissimo tuo figliuolo e per lo vicario suo in terra, che gli sia dato lume sì che con discrezione tenga il modo debito atto per la reformacione della santa chiesa. Uniscasi ancora il populo insieme, e conformisi el cuore del populo col suo, sì che mai non si levi contra el capo suo" (*Oratio* XI, 130).

²⁴⁴ "Pregate e fate pregare Dio e Maria che ne facci fare quella che sia suo onore" (Letter 344, V, 155). Noffke gives the date for this letter between August 15 and 25, 1379.

young poor woman without any material goods, with living faith through the command of Mary, was moved to start a monastery."²⁴⁵

Catherine considers that individuals or groups who dedicate themselves to Mary will be given to Jesus by Mary. Their dedication to Mary helps them to grow in Jesus' love. Thus, she reminds Monna Pavola, a prioress in Fiesole, of the dedication of herself and her sisters to Mary:

Keep in mind, my dearest sister, and never let it go out of your heart or memory or your soul, that you, you and all your daughters, were offered and given to Mary. And beg her that she may present you and may give you to gentle Jesus, her Son, and she as a gentle mother and gracious mother of mercy, will act for you. Do not be ungrateful nor unappreciative because she has not despised your petition, but rather graciously accepted it.²⁴⁶

Monna Pavola and her sisters were dedicated to Mary, possibly by some formal act. Mary "presents" and "gives" them to Jesus. Catherine tells the sisters that Mary will act for them as a "gracious mother of mercy" reflecting her words in her prayer on the Annunciation, where Catherine invokes her as "Mary, bringer of mercy."²⁴⁷ As we have seen, in her letters Catherine frequently encouraged her readers to a greater confidence in Jesus' mercy. In describing Mary as a "gracious mother of mercy," Catherine is urging the sisters to believe in Jesus' mercy because of the compassion they experience in His mother. Mary is the mother of mercy, in that she is the mother of Jesus who is mercy. Her love is also a cause for confidence in God's merciful love.

Catherine returns to the association of Mary and mercy a number of times. In writing to the *Compagnia della Vergine Maria*, a confraternity of laymen who maintained the large hospital, La Scala, as well as a variety of charitable works for the poor, orphans, and pilgrims, Catherine emphasizes the Marian devotion of the fraternity. In this letter she describes Mary as "our advocate, mother of grace and of mercy."²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ "Unde ella con viva fede per comandamento di Maria si mosse, povarella senza veruna sustanzia temporale, a fare il monasterio" (*Il Dialogo*, CLIX, 498).

²⁴⁶ "Tenete a mente, suora mia carissima, e non v'esca mai del cuore nè della memoria nè dell'anima vostra, che sete stata offerta e donata, voi e tutte le vostre figliuole, a Maria, e pregatela che ella v'appresenti e doni al dolce Gesù Figliuolo suo, et ella, come dolce madre e benigna madre di misericordia, vi rapresenterà. Non siate ingrata nè sconoscente, però che ella non à schifata la petitione, anco l'acetta gratiosamente" (Letter 144, II, 283). For an almost duplicate of this passage, see Catherine's letter to Don Roberto da Napoli (Letter 342, V, 138-139).

²⁴⁷ "Maria porgetrice de misericordia" (*Oratio* XI, 118).

²⁴⁸ "La quale è nostra avvocata, madre di grazia e di misericordia" (Letter 184, III, 120). Noffke puts this letter in Holy Week, 1377.

These titles, "advocate,"²⁴⁹ "mother of grace,"²⁵⁰ "mother of mercy"²⁵¹ are not original with Catherine, but Catherine's choice of these titles illustrates her assurance of Mary's concern for humanity. It is possible that there was a commonly recognized association between the titles "mother of grace" and "mother of mercy," as Jacobus de Voragine couples these expressions at least six times in his Marian sermons. On three of those occasions he makes reference to a prayer or hymn in which the titles are joined.²⁵²

Catherine's confidence in Mary's care for sinners is illustrated by an incident recorded in *I Miracoli* in which Catherine heard the blasphemies of two prisoners being taken in a cart to execution. Rather than go to look at the men, Catherine went to an image of Mary and began to pray for the conversion of these men:

Then she turned to the Madonna: "You are set as the advocate for sinners, Virgin and Mother of the Son of God. I ask for these men. Intercede for me for these men, and then I lay upon myself every torment that you wish for them." Finally, as she was praying thus, and the cart was moving, when they were near the place of justice, they begin to cry out and to clearly change, saying with very joyous faces, "There is Catherine, praised be God and His mother the Virgin Mary. We are sinners and we are worthy of this and every suffering. Lord God, have mercy on our souls." And so with these words, so devout and contrite, they both went to the gallows.²⁵³

²⁴⁹ The word "advocate" has been associated with Mary since the time of Irenaeus who affirms the one of the effects of Mary's obedience was "that the Virgin [Mary] might be the advocate of the virgin Eve." "uti virginis Evae Virgo fieret advocate," *Contra Haereses*, V, 19; PG 7, 1175. Advocate was a commonly used expression for Mary. St. Bernard, for example, applies this title to Mary. See "In Adventu Domini," "Sermo II"; PL 183, 43.

²⁵⁰ Jacobus de Voragine brings the expressions "mother of grace" and "mother of mercy" together considering how Mary conserves the good and leads the bad back to mercy: "Bonos scilicet in gratia conservando: ideo dicitur, *mater gratiae*. Malos vero ad misericordiam reducendo; ideo dicitur, *mater misericordiae*." Jacobus de Voragine, *Mariale Aureum*, 14.

²⁵¹ Bernard uses the expression "Mater misericordiae" in his homilies. See Bernard, "Dominica Prima Post Octavam Epiphaniae," II; PL 183, 159. See also "Tractatus ad Laudem Gloriosae V. Matris"; PL 182, 1148.

²⁵² Jacobus refers to what may be a hymn or a well-known prayer: "Maria mater gratiae, mater misericordiae, tu nos ab hoste protege, et in hora mortis suscipe." Jacobus de Voragine, *Mariale Aureum*, 367.

²⁵³ "Poi si rivolgeva alla Madonna: 'Tu se' posta avocata per gli peccatori, Vergine e Madre del Figiuolo di Dio. Io richieggo costoro, impetrami costoro, e poi adosso a me ogni tormento che tu vuogli per loro.' Finalmente costei cosi orando e il carro andando, quando e' furono presso al luogo della giustizia, cominciarono a gridare e a mutare latino, dicendo colle facce molto liete: 'Ecco la Caterina, lodato sia Idio e la sua madre Vergine Maria. Noi siamo peccatori e siamo degni di questo e d'ogni pena. Signore Idio, abbi misericordia dell'anime nostre.' E si con queste voci, cosi devoti e contriti furono amendue in su le forche." Anonimo Fiorentino, *I Miracoli*, 16.

In her prayer, Catherine addresses Mary, as the "advocate for sinners,"²⁵⁴ illustrating Catherine's belief that Mary in a particular way has the office of caring for those who are alienated from their salvation and its source.

Catherine communicates this trust in Mary as a mother of mercy when she writes to a prostitute in Perugia, at the urging of the woman's brother:

Run to that sweet Mary who is the mother of compassion and of mercy. She will lead you into the presence of her Son, showing Him for you the breasts with which she gave Him milk, inclining Him to give you mercy. You, as a daughter and servant, bought back with blood, enter then into the wounds of the Son of God, where you will find such a fire of ineffable charity, which will consume and will burn all your miseries and your defects.²⁵⁵

Some medieval authors give the impression that Mary's compassion may be more accessible than is the mercy of Jesus. Eadmer (d. 1124), for instance, advises that it might be more expeditious to invoke Mary's name for mercy than Jesus' name because Jesus, as the judge, must also weigh the concerns of justice. Mary, by offering her merits for the individual leans the scales of justice in the individual's favor.²⁵⁶ Given Catherine's extensive appeals to Jesus' mercy that we have already seen, it is unlikely that she had such an opinion, although this passage gives a suggestion of the idea.

It may be that Catherine is using the experience of maternal love to encourage this woman and that the mention of Mary's breasts is more for the encouragement of the woman than for the persuasion of Jesus. In fact, Mary's compassion is derived from the compassion of Jesus, the Son of God. From the woman's perspective after the experiences of sin, however, the God Man who challenges His followers to live

²⁵⁴ Jacobus de Voragine describes Mary as "advocata nostra," who presents our causes before God, defends against many allegations, and brings a happy solution: "Advocata nostra est Maria, quae causas nostras coram Deo assumens, ipsas sapieter incipit, inceptas multis allegationibus eas defendit, et ad finem prosperum perducit." Jacobus de Voragine, *Mariale Aureum*, 11.

²⁵⁵ "Ricorre a quella dolce Maria ch'è madre di pietà e di misericordia. Ella ti menerà dinanzi alla presenza del figliuolo suo, mostrandogli per te il petto con che ella l'alattò, inchinandolo a farti misericordia. Tu, come figliuola e serva ricomperata di sangue, entra allora nelle piaghe del figliuolo di Dio; dove troverai tanto fuoco di ineffabile carità, che consumerà e arderà tutte le miserie e' difetti tuoi" (Letter 276, IV, 184). Noffke situates this letter between January 20 and May 10, 1376.

²⁵⁶ "Velociorque est nonnunquam salus memorato nomine ejus quam invocato nomine Domini Jesu unici filii ejus. Et id quidem non ideo fit quod ipsa major aut potentior eo sit, nec enim ipse magnus aut potens est per eam, sed illa per ipsum. Quare ergo promptior salus in recordatione ejus quam fillii sui saepe percipitur? Dicam quid sentio, filius ejus Dominus est et judex omnium, discernens merita singulorum, dum igitur ipse a quovis suo nomine invocatus non statim exaudit, protecto id justo judicio facit. Invocato autem nomine matris suae, etsi merita invocantis non merentur, merita tamen matris intercedunt ut exaudiatur." Eadmer, *Liber de Excellentia Virginis Mariae*, 6; PL 159, 570 A-B.

the Gospel might seem less approachable than the maternal figure of Mary. Catherine's appeal to Mary's breasts reminds the woman of the vulnerable humanity that Jesus assumed out of love for her salvation and so it is a cause for confidence in approaching Jesus.

Catherine encourages the prostitute to trust in Mary's compassion for her sins. Interestingly, when Catherine writes to the Prior and the brothers of the *Compagnia della Vergine Maria*, she singles out sins of impurity as being contrary to service of Mary: "Then I pray you that you hold in hatred and disdain the sin of impurity and every other defect, because it would not be a fitting thing that with impurity you serve Mary, who is supreme purity."²⁵⁷ The fact that it is not appropriate to serve Mary with impurity does not negate that Mary is a "mother of mercy" for those who do sin. Indeed, because Mary is "supreme purity," she is able to strengthen her Son's followers in their struggles with the flesh.

Catherine invokes Mary as a mother under different titles: "your sweetest mother,"²⁵⁸ the "mother of compassion,"²⁵⁹ the "mother of grace,"²⁶⁰ the "mother of mercy,"²⁶¹ and the "gentle and kind mother."²⁶² The human experience that is most analogous to Mary's spiritual relationship with the believer is that of a mother.

It is helpful to examine what Catherine understands by a "mother." Certainly her own experience with her mother was problematic. Raimondo's *Vita* recalls ample incidents in which Monna Lapa fails to understand her daughter. She discouraged Catherine's efforts in fasting, as well as her attempts to join the *Mantellate*, and even her works of charity. Lapa was possessive of Catherine, especially when she was away from Siena, and frequently seemed as obtuse about Catherine's vocation as Catherine was certain about it.

Nevertheless, there were unique bonds between them. Catherine was the only one of Lapa's twenty-five children whom Lapa nursed until she was weaned. Shortly after their birth, Lapa had given Catherine's twin, Giovanna, to a wet-nurse. Giovanna died after a short while. Lapa told Raimondo that because of the nursing and especially after the death of Giovanna, she had come to love Catherine more

²⁵⁷ "Anco vi prego, che abbiate in odio e in dispiacimento il peccato della immondizia, e ogni altro difetto: chè non sarebbe cosa convenevole che con immondizia serviste a Maria, che è somma purità" (Letter 184, III, 120).

²⁵⁸ "Ella è madre dolcissima vostra" (Letter 184, III, 120).

²⁵⁹ "Madre di pietà" (Letter 276, IV, 184).

²⁶⁰ "Madre di grazia" (Letter 347, V, 169).

²⁶¹ "Madre di misericordia" (Letter 144, II, 283).

²⁶² "Dolce madre e benigna" (Letter 144, II, 283).

than all her other children.²⁶³ Despite her large family, Lapa closely involved herself with Catherine's life, even eventually becoming a member of the *Mantellate*.

Catherine applies maternal images to Jesus' actions. She compares Jesus to the wet-nurse who drinks the bitter medicine herself in order to feed it to the child.²⁶⁴ She depicts Jesus as having breasts: "You hold us to Your breast as a wet-nurse, and You have given us the milk of divine grace. You have taken the bitterness and we receive the health."²⁶⁵

She identifies union with Christ with the intimacy of a child and its mother: "Just as an infant who rests pacified at the breasts of the mother, holding in his mouth the nipple of the mother draws to himself the milk by means of her flesh, so the soul joined to this last state reposes at the breast of My divine charity, holding in the mouth of holy desire the flesh of Christ crucified."²⁶⁶

Catherine represents the crucified Christ as a mother's breast: "And just as the infant draws to himself the milk by means of the breast of the mother, so the soul enamored by God draws Him to himself by means of Christ crucified."²⁶⁷ The same image is found in *Il Dialogo*, where the Father describes Jesus as a nursing mother: "...that she may attach herself to the breast of My truth, so she may receive the milk together with the flesh, that is, draw to herself the milk of My charity with the means of the flesh of Christ crucified, that is of His teaching."²⁶⁸

Catherine portrays the virtue of charity as a mother when she writes: "Look at your excellence and your dignity, which you have received from God through the

²⁶³ "Porro Lapa tanto diligentius remanentem filiam enutrivit, quanto prae sorore defuncta electam solam apud se remansisse considerabat: sicque factum est, ut ipsa mihi saepe retulit quod super omnes filios et filias hanc dilexit." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, I, xxvi, 869.

²⁶⁴ "E' fece come baglia che piglia la medicina in persona del fanciullo, perchè ella è grande e forte ed il fanciullo non è forte a potere portare l'amaritudine" (*Il Dialogo*, XIV, 49). "Egli ha fatto come fa la balia che nutrica il fanciullo, che, quand' egli è infermo, piglia la medicina per lui, perchè il fanciullo è piccolo e debile, non potrebbe pigliare l'amaritudine, perchè non si nutrica d'altro che di latte" (Letter 260, IV, 111).

²⁶⁵ "Tu ci tieni al petto come balia, e hai dato a noi il latte della divina Grazia, e per te hai tolta l'amaritudine; e così riceviamo la sanità" (Letter 260, IV, 112).

²⁶⁶ "Si come il fanciullo che pacificato si riposa al petto della madre, e tenendo in bocca la mammella della madre trae a sè il latte col mezzo della carne, così l'anima giunta a questo ultimo stato si riposa al petto della divina mia carità, tenendo nella bocca del santo desiderio la carne di Cristo crocifisso" (*Il Dialogo*, XCVI, 261).

²⁶⁷ "E si come el fanciullo trae a sè il latte per mezzo del petto della madre, così l'anima innamorata di Dio el trae a sè per mezzo di Cristo crocifisso" (Letter 165, III, 42).

²⁶⁸ "Acciò che ella s'attacchi al petto della mia Verità, acciò che riceva il latte insieme con la carne, cioè di trarre a sè il latte della mia carità col mezzo della carne di Cristo crocifisso, cioè della dottrina sua" (*Il Dialogo*, LXX, 183-184).

means of this mother of charity!"²⁶⁹ For Catherine, charity is a mother to the virtues: "She is a mother who conceives in her soul children of virtue, and brings them to birth for the honor of God in her neighbor."²⁷⁰ Catherine also sees prayer as a mother: "Truly this prayer is a mother which conceives the virtues in the charity of God, and in charity of neighbor she brings them forth."²⁷¹ Whether as charity or as prayer, the image of the mother suggests conceiving and bringing forth.

Catherine's understanding of the role of a mother is most evident in those letters where she describes herself as a mother, even if she insists that she has been an "unworthy and miserable mother, the cause of bad and not the cause of any good."²⁷²

She describes a spiritual mother as giving birth through intercession and desire for her spiritual children before God. She applies to herself the maternal act of giving birth as she addresses the Carthusian Don Giovanni dei Sabbatini: "I say and call you son, as much as I give birth to you through continuous prayers and desire in the presence of God, just as a mother gives birth to a son. Then as a mother I comfort you in the precious blood of the Son of God."²⁷³ The spiritual mother consoles her sons and daughters in the blood of Jesus.

The spiritual mother offers and holds her children before God. Catherine tells Frate Bartolomeo that she will be a mother to him through her intercession: "So I wish and I pray tenderly, that, as a son, you may act, and I, as a poor miserable mother will offer you and hold you before the Father, eternal God."²⁷⁴ When Monna Giovanna complained that Catherine's delay in returning from Avignon was separating her son Stefano from her, Catherine responded, insisting that through prayer she

²⁶⁹ "Riguardate la eccellentia e la dignità vostra, la quale riceveste da Dio per mezzo di questa madre della carità!" (Letter 108, II, 146). Noffke places this letter between December 20-31, 1377. This letter was sent to Monna Giovanna Di Capo and to Francesca in Siena, two *Mantellate*.

²⁷⁰ "Ella è una madre che concepe nell'anima i figliuoli delle virtù, e parturisceli per onore di Dio nel prossimo suo" (Letter 33, I, 124). This letter was sent to the Abbot of Monte Oliveto. Noffke places this letter between September 15 and October 31, 1378.

²⁷¹ "Drittamente questa orazione è una madre che nella carità di Dio concepe le virtù, e nella carità del prossimo le parturisce" (Letter 26, I, 89). Noffke sets this letter around May 25, 1379. Catherine wrote this to her niece, Eugenia, a nun at the Monastery at Montepulciano.

²⁷² "E io indegna e miserabile vostra madre, cagione di male e non cagione di veruno bene" (Letter 154, III, 13). Noffke locates this letter between December 20, 1378 and January 10, 1379.

²⁷³ "Figliuolo dico e vi chiamo, in quanto io vi parturisco per continue orationi e desiderio nel conspetto di Dio, si come la madre parturisce el figliuolo. Adunque come madre vi conforto nel pretioso sangue del Figliuolo di Dio" (Letter 141, II, 273). Noffke places this letter in either July or more likely in August 1375.

²⁷⁴ "Così voglio e prego teneramente, come figliuolo, facciate, e io, come misera miserabile madre, v'offerò e tenrò dinanzi al Padre eterno Dio" (Letter 129, II, 237). Noffke considers this letter to have been written to Frate Bartolomeo Dominici when he was in Florence in late 1375 or early 1376.

intended to give spiritual birth not only to Stefano but to his whole family: "You, mother, have given him birth one time, and I wish to bring to birth him and you and all your family in tears and in sweat, through continual prayers and desire for your salvation."²⁷⁵ Spiritual maternity is for Catherine an active desire for the salvation of an individual's soul and a willingness to do what is necessary through prayer and action on that person's behalf.

A spiritual mother also actively encourages and nourishes her child. In another letter to Frate Bartolomeo, Catherine speaks of her maternal concern for a friar who accompanied Bartolomeo on his preaching mission: "Tell Frate Simone, my son in Christ Jesus, that the son never fears to go to the mother. He runs to her, especially when he sees himself hurt. And the mother receives him in her arms and holds him to her breast and nourishes him. Although I may be a bad mother, I will nonetheless always carry him at the breast of charity."²⁷⁶ In another letter she describes the maternal bond with which she wishes to bind Frate Simone to herself: "Tell Frate Simone, that I will take the rope of charity and keep him bound to my breast, just as a mother to the son."²⁷⁷ Catherine even desires to assume the struggles of her spiritual children: "And if the devil might wish only to provoke your conscience, tell him that he may argue with me about this or any thing: the mother has to give an account for her son."²⁷⁸

Catherine's disciples frequently referred to her as a mother. Raimondo makes note of this after recounting an incident in which Mary had assisted Catherine in making bread:

Notice, then, reader, and consider so far how great was the merit of the virgin, that the Queen of heaven deigned to assist her, as she made bread for her children. The Mother of the Word of God giving us to understand that what she brought forth for

²⁷⁵ "Voi, madre, l'avete parturito una volta, e io lui e voi e tutta la vostra fameglia voglio parturire in lacrime e in sudore, per continue orationi e desiderio della salute vostra" (Letter 247, IV, 58). Noffke locates this letter to Monna Giovanna di Corrado Maconi around November 15, 1376.

²⁷⁶ "Dite a frate Simone, figliuolo mio in Cristo Gesù, che 'l figliuolo non teme mai d'andare alla madre, anco corre a lei, singularmente quando si vede percuotare, e la madre el riceve in braccio e tienlo al petto suo e notricalo; poniamo che gattiva madre sia, non di meno sempre el porterò al petto della carità" (Letter 105, II, 141-142). Noffke believes that this letter was written to Frate Bartolomeo Dominici when he was in Asciano in late March 1372, probably near Palm Sunday, March 21.

²⁷⁷ "Dite a frate Simone, ch'io tolro la fune della carità, e tenrollo legato al petto mio, si come madre al figliuolo" (Letter 208, III, 213). Noffke considers this letter to have been written to Frate Bartolomeo Dominici when he was in Asciano around Holy Week, April 6 and 10, 1376.

²⁷⁸ "E se 'l dimonio volesse pure stimolare la conscientia vostra, ditegli che faccia ragione con meco di questo e d'ogni cosa: la madre à a rendere ragione del figliuolo" (Letter 204, III, 200). Noffke believes that Catherine wrote this letter to Frate Bartolomeo Dominici when he was preaching in Asciano, near Siena, in Lent, between February 26 and April 12, 1376.

us through that virgin, she intended as the spiritual bread of the word of salvation, even as through her she gave us material bread of such excellence. So we all, as if compelled by the spirit of God, called Catherine mother, not without cause. Most truly, she was a mother to us, who continuously brought us to birth not with groans and labor but from the womb of her mind, until Christ was formed in us, and she nourished us with the bread of useful and healthy teaching.²⁷⁹

Raimondo emphasizes Catherine's spiritual maternity as it was manifested in her spiritual teaching through which she brings her children to birth from the "womb of her mind."

It seems from these references that spiritual maternity for Catherine consists in bringing souls to birth in a vital relationship with Jesus. This giving birth is accomplished through intercession and through continual desire for the salvation of her children. Mary, as the preeminent spiritual mother, brings children to birth in Jesus by her intercession and desire for their salvation. A spiritual mother actively consoles, encourages, and nourishes her children, and even wills to take on their struggles. Mary, the "Mother of grace and mercy," consoles, encourages, nourishes, and defends her children in the process of salvation.

Catherine believes that Mary desires that all people should receive salvation through her Son and so her maternal care extends beyond those who know Christ. Catherine initiated a letter to a Jewish man, Consiglio, because of her concern that without baptism he would not be saved. In this relatively short letter, Catherine makes mention of Mary six times. Catherine affirms her own love for Consiglio and states her belief that he has been bought back in the blood of Jesus, just as she has been. Then, she asserts that she is writing him because she is calling him to baptism, "compelled by Christ crucified and by His sweet mother Mary."²⁸⁰ Why does Mary compel Catherine? Mary shares Jesus' desire for the salvation of souls, and, in particular, for the soul of Consiglio. Catherine becomes the instrument through which Mary expresses her love for Consiglio.

Writing to Consiglio, Catherine appeals to the love that Mary has for him: "No longer resist the Holy Spirit who calls you, and do not despise the love that Mary has for you nor the tears and prayers which were made for you: the great judgment

²⁷⁹ "Adverte igitur, lector, adhuc, et quanti meriti fuerit haec virgo attende, cui assistere dignata est Regina coelorum, ut panes conficeret filiorum, dans per hoc intelligere nobis genitrix verbi Dei, quod per illam virginem nobis porrigere intendebat panem spiritalem verbi salutis, per quam nobis dederat panem corpoream tantae virtutis. Unde et nos omnes tamquam spiritu Dei cogente, ipsam Matrem appellabamus; nec abs re; Verissime siquidem mater erat, quae continue nos non absque gemitibus et anxietatibus parturiebat ex utero suae mentis, donec formaretur Christus in nobis, et pane doctrinae utilis et sanae nos assidue nutrieat." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, II, ccc, 936-937.

²⁸⁰ "Costretta da Cristo crocifisso e da la sua dolce madre Maria" (Letter 15, I, 49). Noffke posits some time between late January and early May 1376, as the date of this letter.

would be too much for you."²⁸¹ Why does Catherine make this appeal of Mary's love to a man who is not a Christian? Since the man is unknown, it is not clear whether Consiglio had shown some attraction to Mary. It may simply be that Catherine is expressing her certitude about Mary's love for Consiglio since Mary shares Jesus' desire that every person be saved.

Catherine almost always concludes her letters with the words: "Remain in the holy and sweet love of God. Gentle Jesus, Jesus Love."²⁸² However, her letter to Consiglio has a different ending: "Praise be Christ crucified and His most sweet mother, sweet Mary."²⁸³ The actual reasons why Catherine explicitly mentions Mary so often in this letter are not known. What is evident is Catherine's belief that Mary loves Consiglio and calls him to union with Christ in baptism.

Because Mary aids believers in their growth toward the end for which God has desired for them, Catherine considers daily prayer to Mary to be important. Thus, Catherine encourages Count Alberigo da Barbiano, a leader of Urban's armies, to have daily recourse to Mary:

And because we are able to watch ourselves badly, I want you and the others, always the first thing that you may do in the morning and in the evening, to offer yourselves to that sweet mother Mary, praying her that she may be your advocate and your defender. And for the love of that gentle and loving Word, whom she bore in her womb, she may not bear that any deception be done to you but she manifests it in order that you may not be able to perish from deception. I am certain that making the holy beginning, as was said, and this sweet offering, that she will graciously accept your petition, as the mother of grace and of mercy which she is towards us sinners.²⁸⁴

Catherine counsels Alberigo that by offering himself to Mary the first thing in the morning and again in the evening, Mary will be an "advocate and defender" for him, particularly against falsehood. Since the leaders of mercenary armies were known to switch allegiances (Alberigo eventually besieged Urban), Catherine may

²⁸¹ "Non fare più resistentia a lo Spirito Sancto che ti chiama, e none spregiare l'amore che l'à Maria nè le lagrime e l'orationi che sono fatte per te: troppo ti sarebbe grande giudicio" (Letter 15, I, 50).

²⁸² "Permanete nella santa e dolce dilezione di Dio. Gesù dolce, Gesù amore."

²⁸³ "Laudato sia Cristo crocifisso e la sua dolcissima madre Maria dolce" (Letter 15, I, 51).

²⁸⁴ "E perchè malagevolmente ci possiamo guardare, voglio che voi e gli altri sempre, la prima cosa che voi facciate da mane e da sera, si vi offeriate a quella dolce madre Maria, pregandola che ella sia avvocata e difenditrice vostra; e per amore di quel dolce e amoroso Verbo che ella portò nel ventre suo, che ella non sostenga che veruno inganno vi sia fatto, ma che 'l manifesti, acciocchè sotto inganno non possiate perire. Son certa che, facendo il santo principio, come detto è, e questa dolce offerta, che ella accetterà graziosamente la vostra petizione, come madre di grazia e di misericordia ch'ella è inverso di noi peccatori" (Letter 347, V, 168-169). Noffke considers this letter to have been written on May 6, 1379.

be considering Mary as an advocate and defender against the deceptive lure of Urban's enemies.

Again, Catherine appeals to Mary as "mother of grace and of mercy...towards us sinners." Catherine is convinced that those who have devotion to Mary receive special care from God. Thus, Catherine relates to Raimondo the Lord's explanation of why He had used suffering to rescue an individual: "I permitted him this incident, in order that with his blood he might have life in My blood because I have not forgotten the reverence and love which he had for my sweetest mother Mary."²⁸⁵ Catherine maintains that, in God's providence, an individual's devotion to Mary spurs God to act for the person's salvation, that "he might have life in My blood."

In *Il Dialogo*, Catherine refers to this incident again and amplifies God's reason for acting on this individual's behalf:

I permitted this situation that with his blood in the blood of My Truth, My only-begotten Son, he might have life. For I have not forgotten the reverence and the love that he had for Mary, the most sweet mother of My only-begotten Son, to whom this one was given through reverence of the Word, by My goodness. Thus whoever he will be, whether just or sinner, who holds her in due reverence, will not be taken nor devoured by the infernal devil. She is like a bait set by My goodness to take the creatures endowed with reason.²⁸⁶

It is Catherine's belief that God takes whatever extraordinary measures are required to save an individual, even an individual who has not been responsive to grace, if that person reveres Mary. Catherine uses the metaphor of bait to explain how Mary's maternity and compassion attract souls to God. As has been seen, Catherine also compares Christ's humanity to bait and His divinity to a hook, in snaring the devil.

In her prayer on the Feast of the Annunciation, Catherine expresses her confidence that Mary's requests are always granted: "I know that to you, Mary, nothing is denied."²⁸⁷ Excerpted from its context, this passage might suggest that the will of God is adjusted at the requests of Mary. The passage is taken, however, from an

²⁸⁵ "Io gli permisi questo caso, acciocchè col sangue suo nel sangue mio avesse vita; perocchè non avevo dimenticato la reverenzia e amore che aveva alla mia dolcissima madre Maria" (Letter 272, IV, 170).

²⁸⁶ "Io permisi questo caso, acciò che col sangue suo nel sangue della mia Verità, unigenito mio Figliuolo, avesse vita. Però che non avevo dimenticata la reverenzia e l'amore che egli aveva alla dolcissima madre, Maria, de l'unigenito mio Figliuolo, a la quale è dato questo, per reverenzia del Verbo, da la mia bontà; cioè che qualunque sarà colui, o giusto o peccatore, che l'abbia in debita reverenzia, non sarà tolto nè divorato dal dimonio infernale. Ella è come una esca posta da la mia bontà a pigliare le creature che anno in loro ragione" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXIX, 445).

²⁸⁷ "E so che a te, Maria, neuna cosa è dinegata" (*Oratio XI*, 130).

extended commentary on the Annunciation, in which Mary's cooperation with God's will in the Incarnation has been emphasized. Since Mary was and is so wedded to the will of God, her requests could only be in accord with God's will.

Catherine understands that Mary takes a particular interest in those things, which will promote the work of her Son. In the *Libellus de Supplemento*, Caffarini recounts that Catherine said Dominic had a unique relationship with Mary and that Mary was personally involved in the founding of the Dominican Order:

She also said that the same blessed father Dominic was the eminent son of the virgin Mary and that he was given by God to her, as was said earlier. She even added that the Order of Preachers was so special to the blessed Virgin and was uniquely established by her and was carried by her with special care. Whereupon she said that the institution of this order was accomplished by the Son and from the Son Himself, and that the special commission and administration was held by the Son and, by the command of the same Virgin Mother, blessed Dominic began this order.²⁸⁸

Catherine sees Dominic's work as inaugurated by the special commission of Christ, but Mary also is seen as establishing and carrying the Order. Mary's encouragement supports Dominic. She carries his Order which through preaching extends the work of salvation inaugurated by her Son.

In the *Libellus de Supplemento*, Caffarini gives another account of Mary's maternal role regarding Dominic:

In the month of August, around the feast of blessed Dominic she had a wonderful vision of blessed Dominic. For on the day before the vigil of the feast of the saint it happened that she saw him coming from the heart of God the Father as His other son and he was given to the glorious Virgin. Indeed the Virgin Mary herself offered him to God as a son. So she said that God the Father had two special sons, of course, Jesus Christ, the natural and only Son, and blessed Dominic, the special adopted one. So she said that he had a great similarity with Jesus Christ both in body and in works.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ "Dicebat etiam quod idem pater beatus Dominicus erat singularis filius Virginis gloriose et quod a Deo eidem fuerat datus ut superius fuerat dictum. Addebat etiam quod ordo Predicatorum erat quodam singulare beate Virginis et ab ea fuerat singulariter institutus et de eo specialem gerit curam. Unde dicebat institutionem huius ordinis a Filio impetrasse et de ipso specialem a Filio commissionem et administrationem habuisse et ex ipsius Virginis matris ordinatione ipsum beatum Dominicum hunc ordinem inchoasse." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, ii, 41.

²⁸⁹ "Quodam mense augusti circa festum beati Dominici habuit mirabilem de ipso beato Dominico visionem. Nam in vigilia vigilie festi prefati sancti contigit ipsam videre ipsum ut egredientem de pectore Dei Patris tamquam alter eius filius et datum Virgini gloriose. Ipsa vero virgo Maria offerebat eum Deo tamquam filium, unde dicebat Deum Patrem habuisse duos precipuos filios, scilicet Iesum Christum naturalem filium et unicum et beatum Dominicum adoptivum precipuum, unde et ipsum dicebat magnam habere similitudinem cum Iesu Christo tam in corpore quam in opere." Thomas Antonii de Senis, *Libellus de Supplemento*, II, ii, 39.

Catherine's depiction of Dominic as the "other son" of the Father may indicate a partiality to the founder of her Order. However, Catherine's conversations were always to teach a message which would go beyond whatever pride she might have felt for Dominic. Just as the "beloved disciple" of the Gospel of John provides insight into how all believers can be beloved disciples, so Catherine uses the example of Dominic, as the "special son," to teach believers how to be "special" daughters and sons. The "special" son comes from the heart of God and is given to Mary, who gives him back to the Father as His other child with Jesus.

Thus, Mary aids believers in cooperating with their salvation, especially in their struggles through which virtues are developed. Mary obtains for individuals the graces they need to grow in appropriating the redemptive power at work in them, and leads to Jesus those who dedicate themselves to her. Catherine particularly regards Mary as a "mother of mercy" caring for those who are most alienated from God. For all, Mary is a mother, which, for Catherine, means one who brings others to spiritual birth in Jesus through intercession and desire as well as personal care.

Mary Spurs Others to Bring Souls to Jesus

Catherine believes that Mary not only shares Jesus' hunger for the honor of the Father and the salvation of souls but she also stirs others to desire the salvation of souls. Catherine asserts that after Jesus' death and resurrection, Mary animated and supported the disciples in following Jesus' ministry. When her mother, Monna Lapa, complained about Catherine's long absence at Rocca d'Orcia, Catherine responded, insisting that the work of saving souls must take priority over every other relationship. She illustrates her point with the example of Mary's situation after Pentecost:

May you accompany then the sweetest mother Mary, who, in order that the holy disciples might seek the honor of God and the salvation of souls, following the footsteps of her sweet Son, consents that the disciples depart from her presence, though it happens she loved them immeasurably, and she remains alone, as a guest and a pilgrim. And the disciples loved her immensely, yet they leave her with joy, bearing each suffering for the honor of God and they go among tyrants, bearing many persecutions. And if you asked them, "Why do you carry yourselves so joyfully and you part yourselves from Mary?", they would respond, "Because we have lost ourselves and we are enamored with the honor of God and of the salvation of souls." I wish then, dearest mother and daughter, that you may do so. And if until now you had not been, I wish that you be kindled in the fire of divine charity, seeking always the honor of God and the salvation of souls. Otherwise you would be in the greatest suffering and tribulations and you would drag me down with you. You know, dearest mother, that I, miserable daughter, am not put on earth for any other reason, for this my Creator has chosen me. I know that you are content that I obey him.²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ "Accompagnatevi adunque con la dolcissima madre Maria, la quale, acciocchè i discepoli santi cercassero l'onore di Dio e la salute dell'anime, seguitando le vestigie del dolce figliuolo suo, consente,

Catherine's argument is that seeking "the honor of God and the salvation of souls" does not imply any lessening of love for others but is a response to a higher obedience. The apostles and Mary loved each other but parted so that the Word of God might be preached. Catherine wishes that her mother may "accompany Mary" by being kindled by the fire of divine charity as Mary was, "seeking the honor of God and the salvation of souls," which is, Catherine insists, her own reason for being on earth.

Catherine had written an earlier letter in response to similar complaints of her mother when illness among her party delayed her return from Avignon in the Autumn of 1376. Catherine calls her mother's attention to Mary's example: "Although Mary and the disciples had great consolation and the departure was distressing, nevertheless for the glory and praise of her Son and for the good of all the world, she consented and wished that they might part. And she chose their departure with toil quicker than the consolation of their remaining, and it was only for the love which she had for the honor of God and our salvation."²⁹¹ Mary supports the apostles in their mission just as she supported her Son's mission; she "consented and wished that they might part...she chose their departure...for the love she had for

che i discepoli si partano dalla presenza sua, avvenga chè sommamente gli amasse, ed ella rimane come sola, ospita e peregrina. E i discepoli che l'amavano smisuratamente, anco, con allegrezza si partono, sostenendone ogni pena per onore di Dio; e vanno fra i tiranni, sostenendo le molte persecuzioni. E se voi gli dimandaste: 'Perchè portate voi così allegramente, e partitevi da Maria?' risponderebbero: 'Perchè abbiamo perduti noi, e siamo innamorati dell'onore di Dio e della salute dell'anime.' Così voglio dunque, carissima madre e figliuola, che facciate voi. E se per infino ad ora non fuste state, voglio che siate arse nel fuoco della divina Carità, cercando sempre l'onore di Dio e la salute dell'anime. Altrimenti, starete in grandissima pena e tribolazione, e terreste vi me. Sappiate, carissima madre, che io, miserabile figliuola, non son posta in terra per altro: a questo m'ha eletta il mio Creatore. So che sete contenta che io l'obedisca" (Letter 117, II, 185). This letter was written when Catherine was in Rocca d'Orcia to her mother Monna Lapa, and her friend, Monna Cecca, whom Catherine had left at the Dominican monastery of Santa Agnesa di Montepulciano. Noffke sets this letter in late September 1377. For a fuller text of this passage, see Appendix, note 13.

²⁹¹ "E poniamo che Maria e' discepoli avessero grande consolatione e il partire fusse sconsolatione, nondimeno, per gloria e lode del Figliuolo suo e per bene di tutto l'universo mondo, ella consenti e volse ch'eglino si partisseno. E più tosto elegge la partita loro con fatica che la consolatione dello stare, e fu solo per amore ch'ella aveva all'onore di Dio e alla salute nostra. Ora da lei voglio che impariate, carissima madre. Voi sapete che a me conviene seguire la volontà di Dio; e io so che voi volete ch'io la seguiti" (Letter 240, IV, 31-32). Noffke places this letter in October or early November 1376. Catherine left Avignon on the same day in September 1376, that Gregory XI set off for Rome. She was, however, detained because some of those who accompanied her, Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi, Stefano Maconi, Giovanni Tantucci, and Bartolomeo Dominici were sick. The group stayed in Genoa at the home of Madonna Orietta Scotta for about a month. In her response to Lapa's complaints, Catherine asks her to be a lover more of her soul than her body. She reminds her that she willingly let her sons depart for Florence to acquire worldly wealth.

the honor of God and our salvation." Mary desires that the apostles continue the work of her Son, despite the pain it might bring her.

Catherine returns to this same example on several other occasions. She responds to Monna Melina, who was grieved by Catherine's departure from Lucca, by giving her a lesson from the apostles' behavior: "They refused their own consolations for the praise and glory of God, just as eaters and tasters of souls. You ought to believe that at the time that they were so troubled, they would willingly have stayed with Mary, because they loved her supremely."²⁹² Jesus' disciples are "eaters and tasters of souls." This responsibility for souls takes priority even over their love for Mary whom "they loved...supremely." In a similar way, Catherine writes to Frate Bartolomeo Dominici, offering him the example of the apostles, leaving Mary in order to sow the Word: "This is that which removed the pain of the holy disciples, when it was necessary for them to leave Mary and one another, yet to sow the Word of God they willingly bore [the separation]. Run, run, run!"²⁹³

While she was at Rocca d'Orcia, Catherine wrote to two *Mantellate*, Monna Caterina dello Spedluccio and Giovanna di Capo, encouraging them to be patient with her absence. She reminds them of Mary: "And because Mary dismisses them from herself, they did not think, therefore, that the love was diminished, nor that they were deprived of the affection of Mary....You ought not to seek your own consolation, for the honor of God and the salvation of souls."²⁹⁴ In this passage, Catherine states that Mary "dismisses" the disciples. She not only "consents"; she also actively sends them out to follow in her Son's footsteps, "for the honor of God and the salvation of souls."

As we have seen, Catherine is convinced that every follower of Jesus must share His desire for souls. In her letter to the Abbess and nuns of the Monastery of Santa Marta in Siena, she relates that Mary would have made a ladder of herself

²⁹² "Ma refiutavano le consolazioni proprie, per loda e gloria di Dio, si come mangiatori e gustatori dell'anime. Debbi credere che, al tempo ch'egli erano tanto tribulati, sarebbero stati volentieri con Maria, ch'è sommamente l'amavano" (Letter 164, III, 38). Noffke sets this letter between mid-February to March 1376. Catherine had been in Lucca, possibly at Gregory XI's request, to urge that city not to enter the antipapal league. During part of her time there, she stayed with Monna Barbani and her husband, Bartolomeo Barbani. For a fuller text of this passage, see Appendix, note 14.

²⁹³ "Questo fu quello che tolse la pena a' discepoli santi, quando lo' convenne lassare Maria e l'uno l'altro; ma per seminare la parola di Dio volentieri lo portarono. Corrite corrite" (Letter 146, II, 291-292). This letter was sent to Frate Bartolomeo Dominici when he was serving as lecturer in Scripture at the Dominican *studium* at Santa Maria Novella in Florence. Noffke assigns this letter to the summer of 1375.

²⁹⁴ "E, perchè Maria gli parta da sè, non tengono, però, che sia diminuito l'amore, nè che siamo privati dell'affetto di Maria.... Dovete voi la consolazione propria, per onore di Dio e salute dell'anime non cercare" (Letter 118, II, 187). Noffke surmises that this letter was written between mid-August and early September 1377. For a fuller text of this passage, see Appendix, note 15.

because "she has been wounded by the arrow of love for our salvation."²⁹⁵ She then urges the nuns to share these desires:

O dearest sister and daughters, all who are in Christ Jesus, if until now, we did not burn in the fire of this holy desire of the Mother and of the Son, let us not keep our hearts obstinate anymore. Concerning this, I beg you on the part of Christ crucified, that this stone may be dissolved with the abundance of the blazing blood of the Son of God, which is of such heat that every hardness and coldness of heart ought to dissolve. And in what are we dissolved? Only in that which we have said. It is dissolved in hatred and in love, and the Holy Spirit does this when He comes into the soul. So I command you and I constrain you that you may show that you wish this knife in you.²⁹⁶

Catherine recognizes that the nuns may not feel in themselves the same desire for God's honor or for the salvation of souls that was in Jesus and Mary. She directs them to find in Jesus' blood a resolution to the indifference they might perceive in themselves.

In a letter to Monna Pavola and her sisters, Catherine charges them to imitate Mary's desire: "May you all be faithful...(and) run courageously, taking that sweet affection of Mary, that is, that you always seek the honor of God and the salvation of souls. And so I pray you as much as is possible to you, to study the cell of the soul and of the body. There strive, through love and through holy desire, to eat and give birth to souls in the presence of God."²⁹⁷

What is the "affection of Mary"? It is to "always seek the honor of God and the salvation of souls." Catherine adds to her frequently used image of "eating souls" the image of "giving birth" to souls. Here, as Catherine repeatedly does, she relates this eating and giving birth to souls to the cell of self-knowledge, where one lives in the continued realization of one's own weakness and of God's immense goodness, manifested in one's own life and in Christ's blood shed for love.

²⁹⁵ "Ella era vulnerata della saetta dell'amore della nostra salute" (Letter 30, I, 113).

²⁹⁶ "O carissime suora e figliuole tutte quante in Cristo Gesù, se per infino a qui non fussimo arse nel fuoco di questo santo desiderio della Madre e del Figliuolo, non si contenghino più ostinati e' cuori nostri. Di questo vi prego da parte di Cristo crocifisso, che questa pietra si dissolva con l'abbondantia del sangue caldissimo del Figliuolo di Dio, che è di tanta caldezza, che ogni durezza e freddezza di cuore debba dissolvere. E in che ci fa dissolvere? Solamente in quello che detto aviamo: ci fa dissolvere nell'odio e nell'amore, e questo fa lo Spirito Santo quando viene nell'anima. Adunque vi comando e vi constringo che voi dimostriate di volere in voi questo coltello" (Letter 30, I, 113).

²⁹⁷ "Siate tutte fedeli...ma virilmente corrite, pigliando quello affetto dolce di Maria, cioè che sempre cerciate l'onore di Dio e la salute dell'anima. E così vi prego, quanto è possibile a voi, di studiare la cella dell'anima e del corpo: ine vi studiate, per amore e per santo desiderio, di mangiare e parturire anime nel conspetto di Dio" (Letter 144, II, 283). For an almost exact copy of this passage see Catherine's letter to Don Roberto (Letter 342, V, 139). Noffke holds that this letter was written in late June 1375.

While Catherine believes that this realization is strengthened by the recollected life of the physical cell, such recollection does not preclude active ministry. Catherine, whose own life was one of intense involvement with the concerns of others, does not hesitate to challenge her disciples to specific service for others. She was disturbed when her friend, the English Augustinian, William Flete would not leave his hermitage to support the papal cause. Nevertheless, she insists that service for one's neighbor must be grounded in the knowledge of self and of the goodness of God.

Catherine writes to the Prior and the *Compagnia della Vergine Maria* reminding them of their bonds of unity through creation, redemption, and through their common commitment to Mary:

I said that I desired to see you bound in the bond of charity. There is every reason why you ought to be united. You are all created by God, and bought back by one same blood, and then on account of the holy and sweet congregation which you have made in the tender name of Mary, who is our advocate, mother of grace and of mercy. She is not ungrateful to whoever serves her. Rather, she is grateful and appreciative. She is that vehicle, which rightly is a chariot of fire, who conceiving in herself the Word of the only-begotten Son of God, brought and gave the fire of love because He is love itself. Therefore serve her with all your heart and all your affection because she is your sweetest mother.²⁹⁸

What does Catherine mean when she instructs the men of the fraternity to serve Mary with their hearts and affections? Catherine's letters follow a pattern. Her desire for the recipient is almost always expressed in the opening lines. She then develops this theme through the course of the letter. This particular letter begins expressing the desire "to see you bound in the sweet bond of charity, which was that bond which held fixed and nailed God and Man upon the wood of the most holy cross."²⁹⁹ In the course of the letter, Catherine makes explicit what such a bond will require: to avoid sin, to love each other, and to serve the poor. The "service" to Mary in this context implies the imitation of Jesus' self-giving love in faithfulness to God's commands, in mutual love and, in service to the poor.

Those who are devoted to Mary must be devoted to caring for Jesus' people. When Raimondo was elected Prior of the Dominican convent at the Minerva in

²⁹⁸ "[D]issi, che io desideravo di vedervi legati nel legame della carità: chè per ogni ragione dovete essere uniti, si perchè sete tutti creati da Dio, e ricomperati d'uno medesimo sangue; e poi per la santa e dolce congregazione la quale avete fatta nel dolce nome di Maria, la quale è nostra avvocata, madre di grazia e di misericordia. Ella non è ingrata a chi la serve; anco, è grata e cognoscente. Ella è quello mezzo, che drittamente è uno carro di fuoco, che, concependo in sè il Verbo dell'unigenito Figliuolo di Dio, recò e donò il fuoco dell'amore: perocch' egli è esso amore. Adunque servitela con tutto il cuore e con tutto l'affetto, perocchè ella è madre dolcissima vostra" (Letter 184, III, 120).

²⁹⁹ "...vedervi legati nel legame dolce della carità, il quale fu quello legame che tenne confitto e chiavellato Dio e Uomo in sul legno della santissima croce" (Letter 184, III, 114-115).

January 1378, Catherine wrote to him, instructing him that if he will be a true pastor of his sheep, he will be a son of Mary: "Doing so, you will be the gentle son of Mary, and spouse of eternal Truth. I say no more. Give your life for Christ crucified and drown yourself in the blood of Christ crucified. Eat the food of souls upon the wood of the cross with Christ crucified, submerge yourself and drown yourself in the blood of Christ crucified."³⁰⁰ Thus the good shepherd, who eats the food of souls and is willing to lay down his life, is the son of Mary.

Mary personally spurs believers to a greater desire for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. Pressing Stefano Maconi to join her in Rome to support the Papal cause, Catherine tells him this is what Mary desires: "I do not want you to be one of these ignorant ones, but I want you, totally virile, to abandon yourself and respond to Mary, who calls you with the greatest love."³⁰¹ In this letter, Catherine tells Stefano that through self-knowledge in the fire of God's love, he is able to come to love of God and neighbor. It would be quite foolish not to take this welcome opportunity. This knowledge should lead him to give himself generously. Mary calls Stefano to this action on behalf of the Church with "the greatest love." By responding to Mary's call and abandoning oneself to her, Stefano can then be "totally virile."

An example of the relationship that Catherine sees between Mary and ministry can be seen in Catherine's description of St. Dominic. Stressing the apostolic nature of his Order with its special object of learning, Catherine asserts that Dominic was a light "offered to the world by means of Mary":

But for his more proper object he took the light of learning, to uproot the errors that at that time had arisen. He took the work of the Word, My only-begotten Son. Rightly, he seemed an apostle in the world, with such truth and light he sowed My word, lifting the darkness and giving the light. He was a light that I offered to the world by means of Mary, set in the mystic body of the holy Church, as an uprooter of heresies. Why did I say, "by means of Mary"? Because Mary gave him the habit, the work given to her by My goodness. Upon what table did he make his sons eat with the light of learning? At the table of the cross, upon which cross is set the table of holy desire, where one eats souls for My honor. He did not want his

³⁰⁰ "Facendo cosi, sarete figliuolo dolce di Maria, e sposo della Verità eterna. Altro non dico. Date la vita per Cristo crocifisso, e annegatevi nel sangue di Cristo crocifisso. Mangiate il cibo dell'anime in sul legno della croce con Cristo crocifisso: affogatevi e annegatevi nel sangue di Cristo crocifisso" (Letter 100, II, 119). Noffke places this letter between January 20-31, 1378. For a more complete text of this letter, see Appendix, note 16.

³⁰¹ "Non voglio che sia tu di questi ignoranti; ma voglio che, tutto virile, ti spacci, e rispondi a Maria, che ti chiama con grandissim' amore" (Letter 329, V, 83). Noffke proposes that this letter was written between January 15 and February 10, 1379.

children to attend to anything other than to staying at this table with the light of learning, seeking only the glory and praise of My name and the salvation of souls.³⁰²

Dominic brings light by sowing the Word. He sets his sons and daughters at the table of the cross with a particular focus on learning in order that they might "eat souls," seeking the glory and praise of God and the salvation of souls. As a concrete expression of Mary's relationship to Dominic's Order, Catherine recalls the tradition that Mary showed the Dominican habit to Blessed Reginald of Orleans, as she cured him of a serious illness.³⁰³

Catherine herself experienced Mary's help in her ministry. On one occasion, this care came in a particularly gentle form. After a period of famine in Siena, Catherine was staying at the home of her friend, a young widow and *Mantellata*, Alessa. As soon as new wheat was available, Alessa decided to discard the moldy and sour flour they had been using. Catherine intervened and began to make bread with the moldy flour, producing very quickly four times as many loaves as the amount of flour should have yielded. The bread was also surprisingly sweet. Catherine gave this explanation to Raimondo:

Desire seized me that nothing given by the Lord might be disregarded, and compassion for the poor also stirred me, so I went enthusiastically to the flour bin. Presently, my lady, sweetest Mary, accompanied by many saints and angels, came. She ordered me to carry out what I started, and she was so courteous and loving that with her most sacred hands she began to form those breads. By the power of those

³⁰² "Ma per più proprio suo obietto prese il lume della scienza, per stirpare gli errori che a quello tempo erano levati. Egli prese l'ufficio del Verbo unigenito mio Figliuolo. Drittamente nel mondo pareva uno apostolo, con tanta verità e lume seminava la parola mia, levando la tenebre e donando la luce. Egli fu uno lume che Io porsi al mondo col mezzo di Maria, messo nel corpo mistico della santa Chiesa come stirpatore delle eresie. Perchè dissi 'col mezzo di Maria'? Perchè Maria gli die' l'abito, commesso l'ufficio a lei dalla mia bontà. In su che mensa fa mangiare i figliuoli suoi col lume della scienza? Alla mensa della croce; in su la quale croce è posta la mensa del santo desiderio, dove si mangia anime per onore di me. Egli non vuole che i figliuoli suoi attendino ad altro se non a stare in su questa mensa col lume della scienza, a cercare solo la gloria e loda del nome mio e la salute dell'anime" (*Il Dialogo*, CLVIII, 539-540).

³⁰³ Jordan of Saxony, "The Libellus of Jordan of Saxony," in *Saint Dominic: Biographical Documents*, ed. Francis C. Lehner, O.P. (The Thomist Press: Washington, DC, 1964), 50. The text states that Mary showed Reginald the whole habit, which may have been simply an indication of the Order Reginald should enter. Dominican tradition has interpreted the whole habit to mean that Mary gave Reginald the scapular to replace the canon's surplice that the first friars had been wearing. Simon Tugwell, O.P., is of the opinion that the scapular was part of the original habit. In an excursus on the topic, he demonstrates that the constitutions, as they existed in 1216, included a description of the scapular, similar to that found in the constitutions of the Premonstratensians. Simon Tugwell, O.P. "Excursus I: The Dominican habit," in *Bernardi Guidonis scripta de Sancto Dominico*, M.O.P.H., XXVII, 224-225.

sacred hands, the little loaves were multiplied. And Our Lady herself handed me the loaves made by herself and I passed them along to Alessa and her servant.³⁰⁴

This image of Mary is especially tender. Mary affirms the importance of Catherine's service to others. Mary does not overwhelm Catherine in her work but assists her, being "courteous and loving." She forms the bread with her own hands and gives the loaves to Catherine. The bread surpasses what the amount of flour would allow and is especially sweet. Mary is thus one who encourages and aids the loving efforts of Catherine as she seeks to serve her neighbors. With Mary's help, Catherine's efforts accomplish much more than would be reasonable to expect and the results are especially satisfying.

Supported by Mary, one is able to stand secure in proclaiming the truth. Shortly after June 18, 1378, the occasion when she barely missed being assassinated, Catherine writes to Raimondo:

I, Catherine, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, write to you in His precious blood with the desire to see you a servant and a faithful spouse of the truth and of that sweet Mary, in order that we never turn back for anything of the world, neither for the troubles which it might wish to give you; but with a firm hope, with the light of most holy faith, constant and persevering, pass this stormy sea with every truth. And in bearing it let us glory, not seeking our glory but the glory of God and the salvation of souls, as did the glorious martyrs who for the truth disposed themselves for death and for every torment. So with their blood, shed for love of the Blood, they founded the walls of the holy Church.³⁰⁵

Catherine urges Raimondo to be not only a "servant and spouse of the truth" but adds "and of that gentle Mary." Since Catherine frequently refers to Jesus as "Gentle First Truth," the word "truth" suggests not only truth but also Jesus. The context is Catherine's insistence on persevering "in seeking the glory of God and the

³⁰⁴ "Zelus me apprehendit, ne datum a Domino despiceretur, et compassio pauperum etiam me urgebat; unde accessi cum fervore ad arcam farinae, moxque affuit domina mea Maria dulcissima, pluribus Sanctis et Angelis sociata, jussitque ut quod proposueram, agerem; et tantae fuit dignationis et pietatis, quod sacratissimis manibus suis coepit mecum panes illos componere, quarum manuum sacrarum virtute a panelli multiplicabantur. Ipsa namque Domina mihi panes per se compositos dabat, et ego Alexiae et famulae porrigebam." Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, II, ccc, 936.

³⁰⁵ "Io Catarina, serva e schiava de' servi di Gesù Cristo, scrivo a voi nel prezioso sangue suo; con desiderio di vedervi servo e sposo fedele della verità, e a quella dolce Maria, acciocchè mai non voltiamo il capo indietro per neuna cosa del mondo, nè per tribolazioni che vi volesse dare; ma con una speranza ferma, col lume della santissima Fede, costante e perseverante passare questo mare tempestoso con ogni verità; e nel sostenere ci gloriamo, non cercando la gloria nostra: ma la gloria di Dio e la salute dell'anime, siccome facevano i gloriosi martiri i quali per la verità si disponevano alla morte, e ad ogni tormento; onde col sangue loro, sparto per amore del Sangue, fondavano le mura della santa chiesa" (Letter 295, IV, 240). Noffke considers this letter to be written between July 2 and 3, 1378.

salvation of souls" in imitation of the martyrs. The servant of Mary does not turn back for any difficulties but bears troubles even accepting death for the glory of God and for souls.

Catherine sees Mary as a support for those who minister to others. Catherine was aware of Raimondo's struggles when he became the prior at the Dominican convent of the Minerva in Rome. She directs him to trust in Providence and in Mary's care: "Act so that in all things you have recourse to Mary, embracing the holy cross. And never let yourself come to confusion of mind, but in the stormy sea sail with the ship of divine mercy."³⁰⁶ Raimondo must have recourse to Mary in all things. In a similar way, Catherine reassures Raimondo of Mary's help during his stay in Genoa: "Be confident because gentle Mary and the Truth will always be for you."³⁰⁷

Ministry entails sufferings that are at times caused by misunderstanding. Catherine perceives Mary to be one's support at these times. After Gregory XI returned the papacy to Rome, he was overwhelmed by the difficult problems that awaited him. He apparently began to resent Catherine's influence on him, as she had encouraged him to come to Rome. Raimondo, as the prior of an important Roman Church, the Minerva, was required to be present at certain papal functions. On these occasions, Raimondo sensed coldness from the pope. Catherine writes to Raimondo counseling him not to be unnecessarily disturbed by Gregory's apparent disapproval. She teaches him to find his peace in Mary and the holy cross:

And I tell you, dearest father, that when it is possible to you, stay before his Holiness with a manly heart and without any suffering or servile fear. And first stay in the cell before Mary and the most holy cross, with holiest and humble prayer, and with true knowledge of yourself and with living faith and a will to endure, and then go securely. And do that which you can for the honor of God and the salvation of souls, even to death.³⁰⁸

Grounding oneself in the knowledge of the love of God manifested through the Holy Cross and in the love of Mary, one is able to brace oneself for the inevitable hurts that come from speaking the truth. Raimondo can "go securely" when he

³⁰⁶ "Fate che in tutto ricorriate a Maria; abbracciando la santa croce: e non vi lassate mai venire a confusione di mente, ma nel mare tempestoso navigate colla navicella della divina misericordia" (Letter 267, IV, 143). Noffke places this letter in very early October 1377.

³⁰⁷ "Confidatevi; chè Maria dolce e la Verità sarà per voi sempre" (Letter 344, V, 155).

³⁰⁸ "A voi dico, padre carissimo, che, quando è possibile a voi, siate dinanzi alla Santità sua con viril cuore, e senza alcuna pena o timore servile: e prima siate in cella dinanzi a Maria e alla santissima croce, con santissima ed umile orazione, e con vero cognoscimento di voi, e con viva fede e volontà di sostenere; e poi andare sicuramente. E adoperate ciò che si può per onore di Dio e salute dell'anime, infino alla morte" (Letter 267, IV, 146-7).

makes his home in the interior cell of self-knowledge. Aided by Mary and the Crucified Christ, Raimondo must do what he is able for souls, even giving his life.

In December 1378, Urban VI sent Raimondo to plead the papal cause with the King of France. Catherine wrote to her friend, charging him not only to announce the truth but to marry the truth and not to let the truth be silenced through fear. She appeals to the love of Mary as well as the love of Christ crucified as the reasons why he should fulfill his mission: "I beg you for the love of Christ crucified and of that sweet Mother Mary, that you strive, according to your power, to fulfill in yourself the will of God and the desire of my soul, which then will be so happy."³⁰⁹ The love of Christ and of Mary should support and spur Raimondo to fulfill God's will in the service of the truth.

Alarmed by reports that an ambush awaited him, Raimondo turned back from his mission to the King of France. Catherine gently scolds him, as "my naughty father,"³¹⁰ for his lack of bravery but then urges him to find strength in his relationship with Mary:

Therefore, dearest and sweetest father, with weeping we are lifted from the sleep of negligence, recognizing the graces and favors which in the past and recently you have received from God and from that sweet mother Mary, by means of whom, I confess, that you have recently received this grace. In this gift God wishes that you may know the fire of His charity. In this charity, with the light of most holy faith, abandon yourself more widely and generously for his honor and the exultation of the holy Church and of the true vicar of Christ, Pope Urban VI.³¹¹

Catherine turns Raimondo's mind to the graces he has received from God and Mary. His escape from assassination may be the special gift from Mary. As she so often does, Catherine makes the experiences of God's goodness the foundation for serving others. In this instance, Raimondo must serve the Church and Papal cause more generously. His experiences of the special protection of Mary should be an added impetus moving Raimondo to more generous self-giving.

Exhorting Raimondo to be courageous during the struggles of the schism, Catherine indicates that she herself would be rebuked not only by God but by Mary also

³⁰⁹ "Pregovi per l'amore di Cristo crocifisso e di quella dolce Madre Maria, che voi vi studiate, giusta al vostro potere, di compire in voi la volontà di Dio, e il desiderio dell'anima mia; chè allora sarà ella beata" (Letter 330, V, 86). Noffke assigns this letter between December 15-20, 1378.

³¹⁰ "Cattivello Padre mio" (Letter 333, V, 97).

³¹¹ "Adunque, carissimo e dolcissimo Padre, con pianto ci leviamo dal sonno della negligenza, riconoscendo le grazie e benefizii che vecchi e nuovamente avete ricevuti da Dio e da quella dolce madre Maria, per lo cui mezzo confesso, che nuovamente avete ricevuta questa grazia. In questo dono vuole Iddio che cognosciate il fuoco della sua carità; nella quale carità, col lume della santissima fede più largamente e liberamente abandonate voi per lo suo onore, e esaltazione della santa Chiesa e del vero vicario di Cristo, papa Urbano VI" (Letter 333, V, 97). Noffke sets this letter between January 5 and 20, 1379.

for his weakening in serving the Church: "As you are a man in promising your will to act and to endure for the honor of God, may you not then be a woman for me when we come to the closing of the key because I would be rebuked for you by Christ crucified and by Mary."³¹² Ironically, in goading Raimondo to act like a man and not like a woman, Catherine is overlooking the fact that her own behavior and that of Mary are the models of the manner by which Raimondo should act.

According to the anonymous author of *I Miracoli*, Mary showed Catherine that many souls depended upon Catherine's cooperation with God. On the occasion of the feast of the Assumption, 1374, Catherine was very sick, even hoping to die, when she experienced a vision of Mary with a large group of people behind her:

She began to call the glorious Virgin Mary and ask her that she might not remain any longer in this life. With that Our Lady appeared to her, speaking to her thus: "Catherine, my daughter, do you see all this multitude of people who are behind me?" And she said, "My Lady, I see them all." And she said, "As you see it, it is necessary for you now to make a decision. My Son wishes you to live longer, and wants to give you all these people for eternal life, besides those whom He has already given you, therefore He reserves your death to another time. And if you still wish to die now, He will not give you those whom I showed you. And so choose now which decision pleases you more." Then Catherine said to her, "My Lady, you know that my willing or not willing does not exist in me, rather my every will is in your Son, Jesus, and not in me." Then Our Lady said to her, "Be comforted now, for My Son has given you all those whom I showed you, besides those whom He had given you previously, and He will want to call you to Himself in a different way whenever He will want to."³¹³

While the author of *I Miracoli* recounts this incident as a lesson that Mary taught Catherine about her own life, the principle is fundamental to Catherine's thought on Mary: Mary encourages those who follow Jesus to seek the salvation of souls.

³¹² "Come voi sete uomo nel promettere di volere fare e sostenere per onore di Dio, non mi siate poi femmina, quando veniamo al serrar del chiovo; ché io mi richiamerei di voi a Cristo crocifisso e a Maria" (Letter 344, V, 155). Noffke places this letter between August 15 and 25, 1379.

³¹³ "[E] cominciò a chiamare la gloriosa Vergine Maria, e pregarla che questo non fusse che ella rimanesse più in questa vita. Di che la nostra Donna di presente l'apparve, dicendole così: 'Caterina, figliuola mia, vedi tu tutta questa moltitudine delle genti che mi sono dietro?' E quella disse: 'Madonna mia, si tutti gli veggio.' E quella disse: 'Or vedi, a te conviene ora pigliare partito. Il mio figliuolo, volendo tu vivere ancora, ti vuole donare tutta questa gente a vita eterna, oltre a quella che t'è già donata, però che ad altro tempo ti serba la tua morte. E se tu vuogli pure morire ora, egli non ti darà costoro che io t'ò mostrati, e però eleggi oggimai tu quale partito più ti piace.' Allora Caterina dice allei: 'Madonna mia, voi sapete che in me non istà il mio volere nè disvolere, anzi nel vostro figliuolo Gesù ogni mia volontà e non in me.' Allora la Donna dice a lei: 'Ora ti conforta, che il mio figliuolo t'è donate tutti costoro i quali t'ò mostrati, eziandio oltre a quegli che t'avea donati in prima, e te per altro modo vorrà chiamare a sè quando e' vorrà.'" Anonimo Fiorentino, *I Miracoli*, 23.

Catherine perceives Mary to be the strength and the inspiration of those who labor for souls. She urges the new bishop of Castello (Venice), Angelo Correr, to be courageous in his ministry even if he should need to lay down his life. She informs him that this is what Christ and Mary want from him: "I beg you for the love of Christ crucified and of that sweet mother Mary, that you strive to fulfill in yourself the will of God and my desire.... Really marry the truth with the ring of most holy faith, not being silent through any fear, but widely and generously, disposed to give your life, if needed, totally inebriated with the blood of the humble and immaculate Lamb."³¹⁴ Those who love Christ and Mary are disposed to marry the truth and not to silence it, even if they must lay down their lives.

Thus, we see that for Catherine, devotion to Mary flowers in apostolic service. The one who seeks to be a "servant and a faithful spouse of the truth and of that sweet Mary" must imitate the "affection of Mary," seeking the honor of the Father and the salvation of souls. Whether it be the apostles after Pentecost, Dominic founding his order, preaching friars, nuns, or a newly appointed bishop, Mary calls them to be "eaters and tasters of souls." Catherine reminds them to find help in Mary: "Act so that in all things you have recourse to Mary." Staying before "Mary and the most holy cross" in the cell of self-knowledge, one derives strength to "work that which you can for the honor of God and the salvation of souls, even to death," confident that "gentle Mary and the Truth will always be for you."

Conclusion

From the perspective of the history of mariology, Catherine's writings provide a window into the Marian spirituality of Tuscany in the second half of the fourteenth century with attention to the Marian feasts, observance of Saturday as a "day of Mary," the increasing popularity of the "Hail Mary," use of the Marian Little Office, and the particular dedication of individuals and groups to Mary. Catherine's position on the Immaculate Conception is representative both of the Dominican reservations on the doctrine as well as a tendency of the fourteenth-century Dominicans to simultaneously reassert Thomas's position on Mary and original sin and to downplay Mary's experience of original sin. This may be illustrative of a development in the Dominican position or merely a lack of appreciation of Thomas's subtleties.

³¹⁴ "Pregovi per amor di Cristo crocifisso e di quella dolce madre Maria, che vi studiate di compire in voi la volontà di Dio e il desiderio mio.... E realmente sposare la verità con l'anello della santissima fede, non tacendola per veruno timore, ma largo e liberale, disposto a dare la vita, se bisogna; tutto ebbro del sangue dell'umile e immacolato Agnello" (Letter 341, V, 136). Noffke ventures that this letter was likely written between December 15, 1379, and January 30, 1380. Correr would eventually be chosen pope as Gregory XII.

Catherine's contribution goes beyond being a witness of development of Marian devotion. Even though Catherine's Marian theology is not systematic, and it must be gleaned from her letters, prayers, and the few references in *Il Dialogo*, Mary's relationship with salvation is very evident in Catherine's thought. This, of course, is hardly unique to Catherine since the earliest Christian literature relates Mary to the work of salvation. Justin and Irenaeus, for example, compare Eve's role in causing the Fall with Mary's role in the redemption. Yet, at times in the history of the Church, Mary's association with salvation has been less evident in devotion and theology. Catherine's contribution is not the newness of her vision but the clarity of her vision as she depicts Mary closely aligned with Jesus in the process of salvation.

For Catherine, Mary cooperates with the inception of the work of salvation: "Jesus was given to us through the hands of Mary." In presenting Mary's conception and birth of Jesus, Catherine describes Mary in images of giving or bearing that are active and not passive ones, as it would be if Mary's role were solely as an instrument. Mary is the "bearer of the fire," the "chariot of fire," the "bearer of mercy," the "fruitful earth," the "plant" that brings forth the blossom, the "bringer of peace," and the one who shares her "flour."

Catherine's Mary is not a remote figure, but Mary "for us." Her mariology, as it is reconstructed from its various locations, is related to our salvation. She is "that sweet mother who gave Him to us." The close connection Catherine makes between Mary and the redemption may be seen in Catherine's depiction of Mary at the cross. Catherine clearly connects Mary to her Son's desire for our salvation. Mary is "wounded with the arrow of love for our salvation." According to Catherine, so much is Mary conformed to God's will and so much does she desire our salvation, that she desires her Son to die for us and would even make of herself a ladder to place Him on the cross if there were no other way.

As Jesus dies, Mary is united with Him in the flesh He received from her, as well as in her sorrow at His sufferings, but even more intensely in the shared desire for the salvation of souls. After His death, "The will of the Son remained in her." Mary eagerly desires that her Son's work of redeeming souls be continued. She encourages the apostles to leave her, believing that the salvation of souls is more important than being with her.

Catherine portrays Mary as a model of the way in which the follower of Christ appropriates the graces of the redemption. Thus, Mary is not a passive recipient of God's action but is an active cooperator with God. Mary freely chooses and actively cooperates in responding to God's will for her and for humanity. Catherine incites her disciples to imitate Mary in practicing the virtues that are necessary to cooperate with one's salvation: humility, patience, poverty of spirit, and conformity with God's will.

Mary herself aids the process of the subjective redemption. She herself, even as she once physically brought Jesus into humanity, continues to bring individuals to Jesus, through her compassion, her example, and her intercession. With her maternity as an attraction, she, like a bait, is able to draw many to God. She is a "mother of the peace of the Son of God" because her support helps others share the peace won by her Son. She is a "tree of mercy" and a "mother of mercy" because she offers others confidence in the mercy of her Son. She is an "advocate," a "refuge," and "defender" for those in need because she has a maternal interest in their situations.

Catherine is convinced that Mary helps those who want to follow Jesus. Mary acts for those who trust her and, in fact, nothing is denied to her prayers. Those who reverence Mary are, in a particular way, cared for by God. For this reason, Catherine encourages her disciples to "stay with her [Mary]," to "accompany Mary," and to offer themselves "in the morning and in the evening...to that sweet mother Mary."

In a particular way, Mary supports those who take up her Son's work of saving souls. Just as she shares her Son's desire for the honor of God and the salvation of souls, Mary encourages those who would be her servants to be "eaters and tasters of souls," first in the cell of self-knowledge and then in giving themselves for the salvation of others, even to laying down their lives in imitation of her Son.

CHAPTER 4

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SALVATION AND MARY IN CATHERINE'S THOUGHT

A Perspective Rooted in Mission

In this chapter we will briefly summarize the key elements of Catherine's teaching on salvation and on Mary in order to illustrate the connection between these two areas of her thought. We will then identify Catherine's own call to mission as a decisive influence on her approach to these dogmatic issues. We will also examine Catherine's accord with the Church's vision of Mary as outlined in the recent conciliar and magisterial documents, noting that these directions have also been corroborated by the insights of contemporary scriptural and theological scholarship.

In our opening pages, we referred to the fact that Catherine was declared a Doctor of the Church on October 4, 1970, five years after the close of the Second Vatican Council. Because Paul VI, the pope who presided over most of the council and guided the implementation of its directives, considered it opportune to include Catherine and Teresa of Avila in the select company of the official teachers of the Church, we will make a special effort to demonstrate the correspondence between Catherine's teachings and those of the Council.

Catherine's Teaching on Salvation and on Mary

In our second chapter, we have seen the essential principles of Catherine's teaching on salvation. Fundamental to her thought is the fact that God created humanity in order to share His eternal life. In turning away from God by choosing sin, the first parents frustrated God's intention. At times, Catherine employs Anselm's explanation of the requirements of justice necessitating the punishment of a God-Man. At times, she also makes use of the Patristic image of the cosmic struggle between Jesus and the devil. Above all else, however, Catherine continually reiterates what she perceives to be the motive of the Redemption: God's loving desire to fulfill His truth in His creatures by sharing with them His eternal life.

In graphic language Catherine describes the yearning of God for humanity as "desire," "hunger," and "thirst." Christ crucified is the concrete expression of this immense love of God for humanity and Jesus' blood remains the symbol of that love. Catherine's images of the Church illustrate the dynamic dimensions of the effects of Jesus' actions, symbolized by the blood, in the Church. The Church is the

wine cellar of the blood, with the pope holding possession of the keys as the blood is transmitted through the sacraments.

The Church itself is loved because of the blood, has its life in the blood, and constantly needs to find renewal in the blood. As Christ's spouse, the Church is an unquenchable source of life, strength, and light.¹ The Church is where the gate of Christ crucified is found and where one tastes the beauty of God in the abyss of the Trinity.² But the face of the Spouse may also be soiled through the impurity, selfishness, pride, and avarice of its members and ministers.³ Truth is in the Church to be ministered by those who are truthful, love-filled, and illumined,⁴ but selfish love may also cloud the perception of the truth and those who should preach the truth may even deny it.⁵ The Church is a garden, adorned with the fragrance of the holy and virtuous lives of believers,⁶ but the garden may also be filled with thorns, the sins of its shepherds and members.⁷ Catherine's appeals for reform in the Church are rooted in her vision of the members of the Church living out the mystery of God's love, which is confirmed in the blood.

¹ "Questa Sposa porgeva vita, perchè tiene in sè vita tanta, che neuno è che la possa uccidere; e che ella dava fortezza e lume, e che neuno è che la possa indebilire e dargli tenebre quanto in sè medesima" (Letter 371, V, 274).

² "E come neuno può tornare a gustare la bellezza di Dio nell'abisso della Trinità, senza il mezzo di questa dolce Sposa, perocchè tutti ci conviene passare per la porta di Cristo crocifisso, e questa porta non si truova altrove che nella santa Chiesa" (Letter 371, V, 274).

³ "Ma mira e vede come la Sposa mia à lordata la faccia sua, come è lebroza per immondizia e amore proprio ed enfiata per superbia ed avarizia di coloro che si pascono al petto suo, cioè la religione cristiana, corpo universale, ed anco il corpo mistico della santa Chiesa: ciò dico de' miei ministri, i quali sono quelli che si pascono e stanno alle mammelle sue" (*Il Dialogo*, XIV, 45).

⁴ "[P]erocchè verità è in lei: e perchè verità è in lei, vuole essere ministrata da persone veritiere, e che ne siano innamorate e illuminate" (Letter 284, IV, 203).

⁵ "Ma mi pare che la Chiesa di Dio n'abbi grandissimo caro de' buoni ministratori; perocchè è tanto ricresciuta la nuvila dell'amore proprio di noi nell'occhio dell'intelletto, che neuno pare che possa vedere nè conoscere questa verità. E però non l'amano; perocchè, essendo ripieni dell'amore sensitivo e particolare di loro medesimi, non possono empire il cuore e l'affetto dell'amore della verità; e così si trovano in bugie e menzogne le bocche di coloro che sono fatti annunziatori della verità. Ed io, carissimo Padre, ve ne posso render ragione, ch'egli è così: perocchè nel luogo dove io so, lassiamo andare de' secolari, che si trovano cattivi assai e pochi de' buoni; ma de' Religiosi e chierici secolari, e singularmente li frati Mendicanti, li quali sono posti dalla dolce sposa di Cristo per annunziare e bandire la verità, essi si scordano della verità, e in pulpito la menzano" (Letter 284, IV, 204).

⁶ "Il quale giardino fu dimesticato al tempo che ci stavano i veri lavoratori, cioè i ministri santi miei, adornato di molti odoriferi fiori, perché la vita de' sudditi, per li buoni pastori, non era scellerata, anco erano virtuosi con onesta e santa vita" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXII, 355-356).

⁷ "Oggi non è così, anco è il contrario, però che per li gattivi pastori sono gattivi i sudditi. Piena è questa Sposa di diverse spine, di molti e variati peccati" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXII, 356).

According to Catherine, each member of the Church shares in the Church's mission, as God gives each one a unique gift to minister with love.⁸ Grounded in self-knowledge, Christians discern their relationship to God as creatures, as sinners, and as recipients of the blood. As they are increasingly aware of the extent to which they are loved, they grow in their love of God, a progression which *Il Dialogo* describes as climbing the three steps of Christ's body.

Desiring to return God's love, they realize that this response can only be made by loving their neighbors with the generosity and the lack of self-interest that characterizes God's love. They especially seek the greatest work that can be done for their neighbors, to be "eaters and tasters of souls," that is, to cooperate in Christ's desire for souls, by intercession, by words of counsel, by example, and by selfless service. Through the sacraments, through prayer in self-knowledge, through virtue, and through loving service of neighbors, they are progressively transformed into "other *christs*." This transformation leads them to share eternal life with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which is the very purpose for which they were created.

Catherine's teachings on Mary echo her teachings on salvation. Mary is consistently portrayed as one who cooperates with this process of Redemption, both in its objective and subjective manifestations. Mary's role is seen by Catherine as both necessary and freely accepted. In Catherine's perception of the Incarnation, Mary is not the passive recipient of divine action but rather an active participant whose free consent is sought. She is the "means" of the union of God with humanity.⁹ In affirming the necessity of Mary's cooperation in the Incarnation, Catherine describes Mary as "that sweet mother who gave Him to us."¹⁰

As depicted by Catherine, Mary is also a participant, at least by will, in the redemptive actions of Christ on the cross. Catherine's description of Mary as being willing to be the ladder by which to set Jesus on the cross is certainly hyperbole, yet it is effective hyperbole that clearly demonstrates Mary's desire that salvation be accomplished. With Jesus, Mary is "wounded by the arrow of love for our salvation."¹¹ Catherine asserts that, even after Pentecost, "the will of the Son remained in her,"¹² as Catherine portrays Mary inciting the apostles to continue Jesus' mission.

Catherine's depictions of Mary's role in the objective redemption are oriented toward the subjective redemption of her readers or listeners. Her recalling of Mary's involvement in the events of salvation history is directed to the life of Jesus in

⁸ "E per amore voglio (diceva Dio eterno) che ognuno le dia, secondo che io do a ministrare a servi miei in diversi modi, siccome hanno ricevuto" (Letter 371, V, 274).

⁹ "Della quale unione fu mezzo Maria, la quale vesti te sposo eterno della sua umanità" (*Oratio* XII, 138).

¹⁰ "Ella fu quella dolce Madre che el donò a noi" (Letter 38, I, 153).

¹¹ "[E]lla era vulnerata della saetta dell'amore della nostra salute" (Letter 30, I, 113).

¹² "[L]a volontà del Figliuolo era rimasta in lei" (Letter 342, V, 138).

believers now. Mary is the chariot who brings the fire. But the fire is Christ the redeemer and Mary's role as the chariot bringing the fire is incomplete unless the fire is received.

In some ways, Catherine's vision of Mary's cooperation with the subjective redemption of believers through her maternal relationship is not unique with respect to the other authors of her time. Catherine sees Mary as a spiritual mother who gives birth by her intercession and desire. Spiritually, Mary consoles, encourages, and defends her children. As the "advocate, mother of grace and mercy,"¹³ Mary aids the followers of her Son in their struggles in order that the virtues may develop.

What is particularly evident in Catherine's writings is that Mary leads her friends to Jesus. Those who have a special consecration to Mary are led by Mary to Jesus. Catherine's positive vision of the responsibility of all believers to share in Jesus' mission of salvation of souls is especially apparent in her treatment of Mary. Mary supports and encourages those who turn to her in accepting the responsibilities of spiritual maturity as they become "eaters and tasters" of souls, willing to lay down their lives as her Son laid down His life for the honor of the Father and the salvation of souls.

Throughout her writings, the clarity and the lack of reservation with which Catherine fosters ministry in others are particularly significant. Not only priests but religious and lay people are urged to become eaters and tasters of souls. In Catherine's understanding, Mary leads the Christian people to Jesus and to share in Jesus' mission, which is the salvation of souls. This perspective is especially remarkable, given that the Marian emphasis of medieval writers frequently focuses more on one's personal interior moral and devotional life than on mission.

Catherine's Perspective as Rooted in Mission

In a certain sense, every Christian writing concerns salvation, even when the connection between salvation and the particular writing may not be explicit. The concern for the salvation of others, however, not only pervades but burns with passionate intensity in Catherine's writings.

Somewhat paradoxically, Catherine was a woman whose prayer was ardently mystical and contemplative yet her writings are profoundly pastoral. Even among contemplatives, few have experienced such consuming prayer as St. Catherine. The friars at San Domenico hesitated to give Catherine communion because they knew that reception of the host would be followed by several hours of ecstatic prayer, delaying the closing of the church for the afternoon siesta. On occasion, the friars

¹³ "[L]a quale è nostra avvocata, madre di grazia e di misericordia" (Letter 184, III, 120). Noffke asserts that this letter was written near Holy Week 1377.

physically carried her out of the Church to the street, without interrupting her ecstasy.¹⁴ After her acceptance by the Dominican *Mantellate*, Catherine chose the life of a recluse for herself. Only reluctantly, after three years of penance and prayer, did Catherine leave the seclusion of her room at Jesus' invitation to serve her neighbor.¹⁵

Once she was convinced that service to her neighbor was service to Christ, Catherine immersed herself in the care of souls: cleaning the wounds of those afflicted with cancer or the plague,¹⁶ preaching to the crowds at Val d'Orcia,¹⁷ lugging food to starving families,¹⁸ reconciling warring factions,¹⁹ pleading for unity between the pope and various Italian cities,²⁰ as well as lobbying for reform in the Church,²¹ and writing letters to address the spiritual needs of a variety of individuals and groups.²²

Catherine's letters preserve the passion with which she, when she believed it was God's will, inserted herself into other people's lives. Her style, choice of language, and images all advance the invitation to salvation she extends to those to whom she is writing. Catherine always writes with a purpose, identifying the specific spiritual growth that she desires for the recipient in her opening sentences. Catherine is a woman with purpose because she believes that God has a purpose. She believes that her mission is to relate the truth of God's love to the actual experiences of her listeners and readers, and she does not hesitate to do this, even if the recipient is the pope.

¹⁴ Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita*, III, cmdvii, 962.

¹⁵ "Volo te horum praeceptorum iustitiam adimplere, ut non uno, sed duobus pedibus ambules, duabusque alis voles ad coelum." *Ibid.*, II, cxxi, 892.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, II, clviii, 901, ccxlv, 923, cclvi, 926.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, II, ccxxxix, 922.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, II, cxxxii, 895.

¹⁹ Catherine made many efforts to reconcile individuals and groups, such as her Letter 235, to the King of France inviting him to make peace with his brother, the Duke of Anjou, or her Letter 3 to two quarreling priests. Catherine spent about four months working for peace between the powerful Salimbeni family and their neighbors. Her last months were marked by her various efforts and prayers to heal the Schism.

²⁰ Among the letters that Catherine wrote to the Italian cities for the pope's cause are Letters 207 and 337 to the leaders of Florence, Letters 311 and 367 to Siena, and Letter 339 to Perugia.

²¹ Almost all of Catherine's letters to the popes are pleas for reform, as is, for instance, her earliest letter to Pope Gregory XI, Letter 185, in which she chastises him about his selection of unworthy candidates as new cardinals. Other examples of appeals for the reform of the Church are Letter 177 to Cardinal Pietro Corsini or Letter 282 to Nicola da Osimo.

²² The recipients of her letters are as diverse as the treacherous general of a mercenary army, the arrogant leaders of Tuscan city-states, a prostitute, quarreling parish priests, religious, other *Mantellate*, the King of France, a Jewish man, the Queen of Naples, schismatic cardinals, the pope, and her oftentimes complaining mother, among many others.

Catherine's relationship to the Order of Preachers is not coincidental. The Prologue to the Primitive Constitutions of the Order, dating from 1220, asserts: "[O]ur Order is known to have been founded initially precisely for the sake of preaching and the salvation of souls, and all our concern should be primarily directed to this all-important goal that we should be able to be useful to the souls of our neighbors."²³ Catherine recognizes this evangelical charism of the Order, when she assures us (in the Father's words) that Dominic desired that the members of his Order should stay: "at the table of the cross, upon which cross is set the table of holy desire, where one eats souls for My honor."²⁴

As a Dominican woman, Catherine believes that she is called to communicate God's truth to others. She tells her mother that her own reason for living is to seek the salvation of souls: "I wish that you be kindled in the fire of divine Charity, seeking always the honor of God and the salvation of souls....You know, dearest mother, that I, miserable daughter, am not put on earth for any other reason, for this my Creator has chosen me."²⁵ In the face of criticism, Catherine resists the temptation to retreat from the ministry she had begun. She re-commits herself and asserts: "Whether the devil wants it or not, I will bind myself to spend my life in the honor of God and the salvation of souls for all the world."²⁶

Catherine's writings flow from her passion for "the honor of God and the salvation of souls." She is always the preacher whose goal is to lead her hearers and readers to a deeper experience of God. With a Thomistic assurance that the will follows the intellect, Catherine employs every means possible to convince her read-

²³ "Appendix: Early Dominican Constitutions," in *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*, ed. Simon Tugwell, O. P. (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 457. This passage is generally believed to have been adopted at the first General Chapter in 1220.

²⁴ "Upon what table did he make his sons eat with the light of learning? At the table of the cross, upon which cross is set the table of holy desire, where one eats souls for My honor. He did not want his children to attend to anything other than to staying at this table with the light of learning, seeking only the glory and praise of My name and the salvation of souls." "In su che mensa fa mangiare i figliuoli suoi col lume della scienza? Alla mensa della croce; in su la quale croce è posta la mensa del santo desiderio, dove si mangia anime per onore di me. Egli non vuole che i figliuoli suoi attendino ad altro se non a stare in su questa mensa col lume della scienza, a cercare solo la gloria e loda del nome mio e la salute dell'anime" (*Il Dialogo*, CLVIII, 540).

²⁵ "Voglio che siate arse nel fuoco della divina Carità, cercando sempre l'onore di Dio e la salute dell'anime.... Sappiate, carissima madre, che io, miserabile figliuola, non son posta in terra per altro: a questo m'ha eletta il mio Creatore" (Letter 117, II, 185). This letter was written when Catherine was at Rocca d'Orcia to her mother, Monna Lapa, and her friend, Monna Cecca, whom Catherine had left at the Dominican monastery of Santa Agnesa di Montepulciano. Noffke sets this letter in late September 1377.

²⁶ "E voglia il dimonio o no, io mi impegnerò di esercitare la vita mia nell'onore di Dio e la salute dell'anime per tutto quanto il mondo" (Letter 122, II, 207). Catherine sent this letter to Salvi di Pietro, a goldsmith in Siena.

ers of God's love, as it is manifested in the gift of existence, in the passion and death of Jesus, and in the daily generosity of God.

Because Catherine is so firmly convinced of her call to the ministry of salvation, her writings are invitations to believe in and to respond to the love of God, that His truth might be fulfilled. Given Catherine's certainty that her teachings and writing must aid God's work of salvation, it is not surprising that Catherine cannot conceive of Mary except in the context of the salvific love of God.

Catherine's Accord with the Church's Vision of Mary's Association with Salvation

Some of Catherine's ideas reflect the perspective of her own times. However, Catherine's fundamental principles on the relationship of Mary with salvation not only accord with the directions of the Church's teaching in this twenty-first century but also her contributions in this regard can be even better appreciated at this time than ever before.

Catherine's identification of the Cross as central to the Christian faith is hardly novel. Paul insisted that he preached "Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:23). Nineteen centuries of Christian history later, Karl Rahner, S.J., asserts: "The original one and unifying event of the final revelation in Christianity is not a sum total of individual propositions...but the event of God's most intimate self-communication which finds its full historical tangibility and its eschatological irreversibility in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen."²⁷

Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., likewise identifies the redemption as pivotal: "The fundamental tenet of Catholic dogma [is] - namely, that we are redeemed by God."²⁸ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* stresses the centrality of Jesus' death and resurrection in our redemption: "The Paschal Mystery of Christ's cross and resurrection stands at the center of the Good News that the apostles, and the Church following them, are to proclaim to the world."²⁹

What may be distinctive about Catherine may not be her recognition of the centrality of the Paschal Mystery but the conspicuous presence of this belief throughout her writings. Frequently the awareness of the Paschal Mystery in the writings of theologians and preachers is assumed but not explicit. Even if Catherine's intense awareness of the Paschal Mystery were her only offering to the contemporary Church, it would serve as a powerful contribution.

²⁷ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 19, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Crossroads, 1983), 220.

²⁸ Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P. *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*, trans. N. D. Smith (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1964), xiii.

²⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Press, 1994), 146.

The Church's efforts to draw upon its Patristic traditions have particularly validated Catherine's instinct to locate Mary within the context of salvation. Bertrand Buby, S. M., shows us that the early Church envisioned Mary in association with redemption in its first creeds, councils, and in the patristic homilies:

In this material, Mary's virginity, her motherhood, and her holiness are linked to the foundational role that she has in the history of salvation. The New Testament itself, as well as cherished texts from the Old Testament, supported this foundation theme of Mary in the mystery and history of redemption. Thus a soteriological dimension surrounded her person before other viewpoints or characteristics were attributed to her. As mother of Jesus the Savior, she was seen within the mysteries of her Son (Christology or Christotypical) and his redemptive mysteries (Soteriology) – his Passion/Death and Resurrection.³⁰

This association of Mary with the mission of Christ can be seen throughout the tradition. At critical moments in the Church's history, the Church articulated truths about Mary in order to make Christological truths more explicit. Thus, some of the earliest non-scriptural references to Mary, which are found, for instance, in the writings of Ignatius (d. c. 110) and Tertullian (d. after 220), emphasize Jesus' physical birth from Mary in contrast to the Docetists who denied the reality of Jesus' body. The concern of the Council of Ephesus with regard to the title *Theotokos* for Mary was focused on the unity of Jesus' two natures in one Person. Thomas Aquinas has noted this connection in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, "[T]he humanity of Christ and the maternity of the Virgin are so interrelated that he who has erred about the one must be in error about the other."³¹

The Christian tradition, through reflection, perceived Mary as being actively involved in our salvation. The Lutheran and Catholic Dialogue VIII, with reference to the Middle Ages, states: "Her role in the history of salvation was lifted up for contemplation. Christologically she was seen as the Mother of God, soteriologically as the most obedient actor in the process of salvation."³²

However, in their devotion to Mary, some theologians and spiritual writers have so emphasized Mary's uniqueness as to unwittingly dissociate Mary from Jesus and from the work of salvation. Raniero Cantalamessa comments, "...the fundamen-

³⁰ Bertrand Buby, S.M., *The Marian Heritage of the Early Church*, Vol. III, *Mary of Galilee* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1997), 63.

³¹ "...humanitas Christi et maternitas Virginis adeo sibi connexa sunt, ut qui circa unum erraverit, oporteat etiam circa aliud errare." *Commentarium in quattuor libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi*, III, dist. 4, q. 2. a.2.

³² *The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary*, ed. H. George Anderson, J. Francis Stafford, Joseph A. Burgess et al. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992), 94.

tal category through which Mary's greatness was explained was that of privilege, or exemption."³³

The increasing secularity of our contemporary society has spurred an acute awareness that the Church is missionary by nature and sharpened the Church's focus on salvation in Jesus. This attention to salvation moves the Second Vatican Council to draw attention to the fact that the truths of the faith are ordered in a hierarchy, so that all truths are related to the central truths, the Trinity, the Incarnation, and Redemption.³⁴

In choosing to present Mary within the schema on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, the Council sought to identify the essential principles on Mary in relationship to the fundamental mysteries of the Church's faith.³⁵ Fr. Frederick Jelly, O.P., points out that the very title of Chapter VIII, *De Beata Maria Virgine Deipara in Mystero Christi et Ecclesiae*, illustrates this relationship: "[This] portrays Mary in proper perspective, i.e., as always to be contemplated in close relationship to her Son and his redeemed-redeeming Body, the Church."³⁶

³³ "It was thought that she had been exempted not only from original sin and corruption (privileges the Church defined in the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption), but it was even believed that Mary had been exempted from the pangs of childbirth, from fatigue, doubt, temptation, ignorance, and (worse still) even from death. In fact, some believed that Mary didn't die before being assumed into heaven. All these things, it was reasoned are consequences of sin, but Mary was sinless. They didn't realize that instead of associating Mary with Jesus, they were totally dissociating her from him, who, although he was without sin, had wanted to experience all these things: fatigue, sorrow, anguish, temptation, and death for our sake." Raniero Cantalamessa, *Mary, Mirror of the Church*, trans. Frances Lonergan Villa (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 81.

³⁴ "When comparing doctrines with one another, they [the theologians] should remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists an order or 'hierarchy' of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith." *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 11, 12 (Decree on Ecumenism), in *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, Vatican II*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: 1975), 462.

³⁵ Otto Semmelroth tells us about the concern of the Second Vatican Council on the way to best present the Church's teachings on Mary: "The question was how Mary's position, and devotion to her, could be better explained: should she be treated as a figure apart, as it were in her own right, with all the risk of isolation that would involve, or in a context which alone could bring out her importance in the work of redemption and therefore in the Church's devotion?" Otto Semmelroth, "Chapter VIII, The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God in the Mystery of Christ and the Church," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. I, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 285-286.

³⁶ Frederick Jelly, O.P., "The Theological Context of and Introduction to Chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium*," *Marian Studies XXXVII* (1986): 70. The Council's approach to Mary is characterized by *The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary* (Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VIII), in this way: "The reality of Mary's life, then, is intertwined with the great events of the coming of salvation in Jesus Christ." *The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary*, ed. H. George Anderson, J. Francis Stafford, Joseph A. Burgess et al. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992), 111.

Stefano De Fiore notes that the Council documents place Mary within the context of the Church and salvation history and thus mariology must not be isolated but seen in the light of Christ and the Church.³⁷ As William M. Thompson notes: "The Marian dimension now is the soteriological side of christology, its 'for us' dimension."³⁸

By reflecting on Mary in the context of redemption, Mary's intimate involvement with her Son is seen with greater clarity even as the Marian teachings of the Church, in their own way, shed light on the mystery of Christ. The direction of Catherine's mariology to the Incarnation and the Redemption is very much in line with this vision of the Church, as articulated by the Second Vatican Council.

Lumen Gentium affirms the interrelationship of the dogmas of Christ and Mary: "By having deeply entered into the history of salvation Mary somehow unites in herself and radiates the most important teachings of the faith."³⁹ The Letter from the Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Virgin Mary in Intellectual and Spiritual Formation* (March 25, 1988), reflects upon these words of the Council:

The Council allied itself to the patristic tradition which gives a privileged place to the history of salvation in every theological tract; [and] stressed that the Mother of the Lord is not a peripheral figure in our faith and in the panorama of theology; rather she, through her intimate participation in the history of salvation, "in a certain way united and mirrors within herself the central truths of the faith."⁴⁰

Recent popes have been very mindful of this relationship between Mary and Jesus' saving work. Pope Paul VI, for instance, in his apostolic exhortation, *Marialis Cultus*, describes Mary as Jesus' "worthy associate" who acts "within the total

³⁷ Stefano De Fiore, S.M.M., "Maria nelle prospettive post-conciliari," in *Maria nella comunità ecumenica ecumenica*, ed. S.A.E. (Roma, 1982), 70, quoted by Stefano De Fiore, S.M.M., "Mary in Postconciliar Theology," in *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives, Twenty-Five Years After*, vol. 1, ed. René Latourelle (New York/ Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1988), 473.

³⁸ "Our study of the virginal conception also opened out onto another side of Christology, its 'soteriological' side. Grace is not just offer and possibility, but effectively real in human history. Mary's unique birthing 'cooperatively' effects in history, and indeed symbolizes the uniquely new reality of transforming grace. Here she is both 'New Eve' and 'Mother of the Church,' while the first aspect perhaps stresses her role as 'first disciple' of faith (her maternity is primarily a maternity made possible through her faithful acceptance of grace). The Marian dimension now is the soteriological side of christology, its 'for us' dimension. In terms of grace: grace not only as offer, but as transforming reality." William M. Thompson, *Christology and Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 154.

³⁹ Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 65, in "Appendix IV," *Marian Studies XXXVII* (1986): 253.

⁴⁰ *The Virgin Mary in Intellectual and Spiritual Formation*, Letter from the Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome, 25 March 1988, in *Marian Studies*, XXXIX (1988):206, art. 5,

mystery of Christ."⁴¹ Similarly, the *General Introduction* to the *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, demonstrates the close relationship of Mary with salvation as seen in the Liturgy:

Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary have their meaning and purpose from her close participation in the history of salvation. Therefore when the Church commemorates the role of the Mother of the Lord in the work of redemption or honors her privileges, it is above all celebrating the events of salvation in which, by God's salvific plan, the Blessed Virgin was involved in the mystery of Christ.⁴²

Contemporary theologians resonate with the idea of Mary's role as Jesus' associate. Thus the Anglican theologian John Macquarrie remarks on Mary's role as it is seen in the Infancy Narratives:

She has a central role in the matter – indeed, in Matthew and Luke, she is represented as the sole human agent in the generation of Jesus. So already in the first century, already in two of the canonical gospels, Mary is being accorded a unique and highly exalted place in salvation-history, though always in subordination to her Son, for whose sake she was elected by God. Especially when we consider Luke's narrative, including both the address of the angel and the affirmative response of Mary, it is perhaps not going too far to say that here we already have some pointers to the very much later idea of Mary as Coredemptrix, for she is already recognized as the pre-eminent human agent in those events which led to the birth of Jesus and the coming into being of that new humanity of which he is both the first member and the source.⁴³

Catherine reflects the Gospel and Patristic view of Mary in relation to Jesus' redeeming work, portraying Mary as the one who receives Jesus for humanity,⁴⁴ and who bears and gives Jesus to humanity.⁴⁵ An aspect that is especially clear in

⁴¹ "The post-conciliar renewal has...properly considered the Virgin within the total mystery of Christ and has recognized, in harmony with tradition, her singular place in Christian worship as the holy Mother of God and the worthy associate of the Redeemer." Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, in *The Pope Speaks*, 19/1 (1974): 59, art. 15.

⁴² "General Introduction," *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, vol. 1. *Sacramentary* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1992), 14.

⁴³ John Macquarrie, *Mary for All Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 40.

⁴⁴ Catherine always interprets Jesus' actions in a relational sense. Jesus, the Son of God, "mad with love," enters into relationship with humanity and Mary's cooperation makes that possible. According to Catherine, Jesus' coming is a "grafting" into us "in the field of Mary." "O fire, o abyss of charity, that we not be separated from You, You have wished to make a grafting of Yourself in me, and this was when You sowed Your word in the field of Mary." "O fuoco, o abisso di carità, perchè non siamo separati da te, ài voluto fare uno innesto di te in me, e questo fu quando seminasti la parola tua nel campo di Maria" (Letter 77, II, 24).

⁴⁵ For Catherine, Mary "bears Jesus," "brings Jesus," "gives Jesus," "to us." Mary is essential to the redemption because, as Catherine says, "The Eternal Word was given to us through the hands of Mary. And He was clothed with our nature with the substance of Mary." "Dato è a noi el Verbo

Catherine's writings is that Mary's cooperation is necessary not arbitrary. She is the means for the marriage of God and humanity.⁴⁶ Because of her, the relationship of God to humanity is definitively changed: "God has become a relative with you in Mary."⁴⁷

Mary, the First Disciple, the First to Believe in Christ

In addition to Catherine's accord with the Church's desire to view Mary within the context of salvation, Catherine's thought on Mary concurs with other important aspects of contemporary Marian thought. In recent years, great emphasis has been placed on Mary's role as a model for disciples. This theme was well articulated by Augustine: "Holy Mary plainly did the will of the Father, and so it was greater for Mary to be Christ's disciple than to be the mother of Christ. She was more blessed as a disciple of Christ than she was as the mother of Christ."⁴⁸ Mary's role as a believer was well developed by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical letter, *Redemptoris Mater*. The pope states:

In the expression "Blessed is she who believed," we can therefore rightly find a kind of "key" which unlocks for us the innermost reality of Mary, whom the angel hailed as "full of grace." If as "full of grace" she has been eternally present in the mystery of Christ, through faith she became a sharer in that mystery in every extension of her earthly journey. She "advanced in her pilgrimage of faith" and at the same time, in a discreet yet direct and effective way, she made present to humanity the mystery of Christ. And she still continues to do so.⁴⁹

Biblical scholars have increasingly recognized the significance of Mary as a disciple. *Mary in the New Testament*, a collaborative statement prepared by twelve prominent Protestant and Catholic scripture scholars, affirms: "She is a believer for whom God's word is enough. For Luke she is the first Christian disciple."⁵⁰ These

eterno per le mani di Maria; e della substancia di Maria si vesti della natura nostra" (*Oratio* XVI, 190).

⁴⁶ "Mary was the means of that union, who clothed You, the eternal bridegroom, with her humanity." "Della quale unione fu mezzo Maria, la quale vesti te sposo eterno della sua umanità" (*Oratio* XII, 140).

⁴⁷ "Dio oggi ha fatto parentado con teo in Maria" (*Oratio* XI, 128).

⁴⁸ "Fecit, fecit plane voluntatem Patris sancta Maria, et ideo plus est Mariae, discipulam fuisse Christi, quam matrem fuisse Christi. Plus est felicius discipulum fuisse Christi, quam matrem fuisse Christi." Augustine, Sermo XXV, "De Verbis Evangelii Matthaei. XII"; PL 46, 937.

⁴⁹ John Paul II, "Mother of the Redeemer" (*Redemptoris Mater*), 19 (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1987), 26.

⁵⁰ *Mary in the New Testament*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, and John Reumann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 126.

authors assert that Mary is "the first one to hear the Gospel."⁵¹ Joseph Fitzmyer, having weighed the significance of each of Luke's Marian references, concludes that Mary reflects "the Lucan picture of Christian discipleship... as one who cooperates with God's plan of salvation... For Luke, Mary is the model believer."⁵²

Other scholars, as well, have reflected on the significance of Mary as a disciple. Daniel M. Stanley, S.J., points out that Mary is "the charter member of the Johannine Church,"⁵³ who "symbolizes the ideal disciple of Jesus."⁵⁴ Likewise, Ignace de la Potterie acknowledges: "This image of the 'perfect disciple' has value certainly in the first place for Mary. She is, in the New Testament, the model of attentive openness, of faithful docility, and virginal attachment with regard to God and to his Son."⁵⁵ Raymond Brown, in a similar way, focuses on the theme of discipleship: "Critical exegesis uncovers a NT trajectory increasingly portraying Mary as a pre-

⁵¹ "If, as we have seen, 1:32, 33, 35 contains a basic post-resurrectional proclamation of Christian faith, then Mary is being presented as the first one to hear the gospel." *Ibid.*, 125. These authors identify Mary's association with the *anawim* as a key to her role: "Luke gives her an important role in that salvation history, a representative role that will continue from the infancy narrative into the ministry of Jesus, and finally into the early Church." *Ibid.*, 143.

⁵² "Much more important, however, [than the virginal conception] in a mariological sense is the depiction of Mary as 'the favored one,' chosen to be the mother of him who will be hailed the Savior, Messiah, and Lord (2:11). This element of Mary's motherhood will appear again in the Lucan account (8:19-21; 11:27-28) and in Acts 1:14; her motherhood will serve the Lucan picture of Christian discipleship. And still more important is Luke's portrayal of Mary as 'the handmaid of the Lord' (1:38). Here Luke writes with hindsight, and foreshadows the way in which he will depict Mary in the Gospel proper.... Here Mary's enthusiastic response to the angel depicts her from the very beginning of the account as one who cooperates with God's plan of salvation.... For Luke, Mary is the model believer, pronounced blessed; and because she has been favored, she will be declared blessed by all generations. In Acts 1:14 she sits among the believers awaiting the promised Holy Spirit." Joseph Fitzmyer, S.J., *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1984), 341.

⁵³ Daniel M. Stanley, S.J., *I Encountered God: The Spiritual Exercises with the Gospel of St. John* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1986), 262.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁵⁵ Ignace de la Potterie, S.J., *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, trans. Bertrand Buby, S.M. (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1992), 151. La Potterie, commenting on why Mary is never given her proper name in John's Gospel, states: "That which has interest for John then, is the role that this woman played in the history of salvation; she who was the mother of Jesus and who would become the mother of the disciples.... In the history of salvation, this woman who became the Mother of the Son of God, has universal significance." *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, 69-70. La Potterie also notes: "As an individual person, she is the mother of Jesus; in her symbolic and representative role (as Daughter of Zion) she becomes his Spouse and his collaborator in the work of salvation." *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, 233.

eminent, and even the first, Christian disciple."⁵⁶ These authors recognize that Mary is not only the "first disciple" but also a model of discipleship.

Catherine follows a similar course. As she reflects upon Mary at the Annunciation in her *Oratio XI*, Catherine teaches discipleship from a Catherinian perspective, beginning with self-knowledge:

O Mary, vessel of humility, in which vessel remains and burns the light of the true knowledge, with which you rose above yourself. And so you were pleasing to the eternal Father, so He took you and drew you to Himself, loving you with a singular love. With this light and the fire of your charity and with the oil of your humility you drew to yourself and inclined His divinity to come into you, although He was already drawn by the most burning fire of His inestimable charity to come to us. O Mary, because you had this light, you were not foolish but prudent. So with prudence you wished to ask the angel how what was announced to you was possible. And did you not know that this was possible to the almighty God? Certainly yes, without any doubt. Then why did you say that you do not know man? Not because you were lacking in faith, but through your profound humility, considering your unworthiness; but not because you doubted that this was possible to God. Mary, were you disturbed through fear at the word of the angel? It does not seem that you were disturbed through fear, if I look into the light, although you showed some act of wonder and some disturbance. Then, why did you wonder? At the great goodness of God which you saw, and considering yourself, at how unworthy you knew yourself, you were astounded at such a grace. Then in consideration of your indignity and weakness and the ineffable grace of God, you marveled and became astonished. So, asking with prudence, you showed your deep humility, and as was said, you did not have fear, but amazement at the immeasurable goodness and charity of God for your lowliness and smallness of your virtue.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Raymond E. Brown, S.S., *Biblical Exegesis and Church Doctrine* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 97. "So on the cross John gives an answer to 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' by pointing to the two who stand at the foot of the cross and believe in Jesus. He leaves them behind as the family of disciples who constitute truly a mother and a brother." *Ibid.*, 96.

⁵⁷ "O Maria vassello d'umiltà, nel quale vassello sta e arde el lume del vero cognoscimento, col quale tu levasti te sopra di te, e però piacesti al Padre eterno, unde egli ti rapì e trasse a sé amandoti di singulare amore. Con questo lume e fuoco della tua carità e con l'olio della tua umiltà traesti tu e inchinasti la divinità sua a venire in te, benchè prima fu tratto da l'ardentissimo fuoco della sua inestimabile carità a venire a noi. O Maria, perchè tu avesti questo lume, però non fusti stolta ma prudente, unde con prudenzia volesti investigare da l'angelo come fusse possibile quello che l'annunciava. E non sapevi tu che questo era possibile a l'onipotente Dio? Certo sì, senza veruna dubitazione. Dunque perchè dicevi quoniam virum non cognosco? Non perchè tu mancassi in fede, ma per la tua profonda umiltà, considerando la indignità tua; ma non che tu dubitassi che questo fusse possibile appo Dio. Maria, fusti tu conturbata nella parola de l'angelo per paura? Non pare, se io raguardo nel lume, che per paura tu fussi conturbata, benchè tu mostrassi alcuno atto d'ammirazione ed alcuna conturbazione. Adunque, di che ti maravigli? Della grande bontà di Dio la quale tu vedevi; e considerando te medesima, quanto tu ti cognoscevi indegna a tanta grazia eri stupefatta; dunque nella considerazione della indegnità e infermità tua e della ineffabile grazia di Dio diventasti ammirata e stupefatta. Così adimandando tu con prudenzia dimostri la profonda umiltà tua; e, come detto è,

Certainly her meditation is about Mary and her virtue at the moment of the Annunciation but this meditation also serves as an instruction on how disciples should relate to God, "in the light of true knowledge." Mary is the model of the virtues of humility and prudence, as she dwells in self-knowledge, with "amazement at the immeasurable goodness and charity of God for [her] lowliness and smallness of [her] virtue."

Catherine consistently employs the events of the history of salvation to teach the actuality of the salvation in the present moment. When Catherine reflects on the freedom of Mary's cooperation,⁵⁸ a freedom that is also accentuated by the Second Vatican Council's teachings,⁵⁹ she calls attention to the way in which God and the soul cooperate. It is not surprising that, after depicting Mary's response, Catherine begins to comment on the inviolability of the will to choose.⁶⁰ This is not a philosophical musing on the freedom of the will. This is a challenge to her hearers and readers to choose to cooperate with God's salvific activity, even as Mary has done.

Mary as a Model for Our Cooperation with God

The question of human cooperation with God has widespread ramifications in contemporary theological discussion. In mariology this question has a special significance with regard to Mary's association with Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. The Council Fathers, following a long tradition in the Church, assert that Mary associ-

non avesti timore, ma ammirazione della smisurata bontà e carità di Dio per la bassezza e piccolezza della virtù tua" (*Oratio* XI, 120-122).

⁵⁸ "God knocks at the door of the will and waits that she may open to Him." "Bussa Dio a la porta della volontà e aspetta che ella gli apra" (*Oratio* XI, 128).

⁵⁹ "Rightly therefore do the holy fathers consider Mary not as being used by God merely passively but as cooperating in human salvation with a free faith and obedience." Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 56, in "Appendix IV," *Marian Studies* XXXVII (1986): 242-243.

⁶⁰ "For He wished to come into you and He would never have entered you unless you had opened, saying, 'Here is the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me, according to your word.' Then surely the strength and liberty of the will are shown because neither any good nor bad is able to be done without the will. And neither the devil nor anyone is able to force it to the guilt of deadly sin if it does not wish. Nor yet is it able to be forced to work any good more than it wills, so that the human will is free because no one is able to force it to evil nor to good if it does not wish." "[C]hé voleva venire in te; e giamai non vi sarebbe intrato se tu non gli avesse aperto dicendo: 'Ecco l'ancilla del Signore, sia fatto a me secondo la parola tua.' Dunque manifestamente si dimostra la fortezza e libertà della volontà; ché né bene né male veruno si può fare senza essa volontà; e non è demonio né creatura che possa costringerla a colpa di peccato mortale se ella non vuole, né ancora può essere costretta ad adoperare veruno bene più che ella si voglia, si che la volontà de l'uomo è libera, ché neuno la può costringere a male né a bene se ella non vuole" (*Oratio* XI, 126-128).

ated herself with her Son's sacrifice and consented to it.⁶¹ As we have seen, Catherine also emphasizes Mary's participation with Jesus' sufferings and does so very graphically, while her use of the word *ricomperatrice* should not be taken in a strict or condign sense of "redemptress."⁶²

The cooperation with the work of Christ, which the Second Vatican Council proposes, applies to Mary in an eminent way but is possible for all believers.⁶³ Catherine's use of Mary as a model of cooperation with Christ demonstrates this sense of cooperation for all Christians.

In Catherine's writings, there is an understanding that, in some way, Mary and the saints assist Christ in the work of salvation.⁶⁴ Some insight into human cooperation with God, which would apply to all believers and particularly to Mary, may be found in Catherine's conception of individuals becoming other *christs*. These other

⁶¹ "The Blessed Virgin also advanced in the pilgrimage of faith and faithfully sustained her union with her Son unto the Cross where she stood, not without the divine intention, suffered grievously with her Only-begotten and associated herself with his sacrifice by her motherly spirit, lovingly consenting to the immolation of the victim born of her." Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 58, in "Appendix IV," *Marian Studies XXXVII* (1986): 245.

⁶² "So great is His hunger and great desire of holy obedience to the Father, that He has lost self-love of Himself to run to the cross. That sweetest and dearest mother does the same, who willingly loses the love of the Son, for not only does she not do as a mother who draws Him back from death, but she wishes to become the ladder and wishes that He die. Indeed, this is not surprising because she was wounded by the arrow of love for our salvation." "Tanta è la fame e 'l grande desiderio della santa obbedientia del Padre, ch'elli à perduto l'amore proprio di sè e corre alla croce. Questo medesimo fa quella dolcissima e carissima Madre, che volontariamente perde l'amore del Figliuolo: che non tanto ch'ella faccia come madre, che 'l ritraga dalla morte, ma ella si vuole fare scala e vuole ch'egli muoia. Ma non è grande fatto, però ch'ella era vulnerata della saetta dell'amore della nostra salute" (Letter 30, I, 112-113).

⁶³ "Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix. This, however, is so understood as neither to take anything away from nor add anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator. For no creature could ever be ranked along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer; but just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by the ministers and by the faithful people, and just as the one goodness of God is in reality spread abroad in different ways among his creatures, so also the Redeemer's unique mediation does not exclude but rather stirs up among creatures a varied cooperation that participates in this unique source. The Church does not hesitate to profess Mary's subordinate role of this kind, continually experiences it, and commends it to the hearts of the faithful, so that, encouraged by this maternal protection, they may the more intimately cling to their Mediator and Savior." Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 62, in "Appendix IV," *Marian Studies XXXVII* (1986): 249-250.

⁶⁴ "I hope, through the abundance of the blood of Jesus Christ, and through the merits of these, and of that gentlest Mother, we will enjoy and see Christ face to face." "Spero, per l'abondanzia del sangue di Gesù Cristo, e per li meriti di costoro, e di quella dolcissima Madre, noi gustaremo e vederemo Cristo a faccia a faccia" (Letter 30, I, 116).

mediators seek the reconciliation of the world through intercession and the example of their lives:

Truly these are able to be called another Christ crucified, My only-begotten Son, because they have undertaken to do His work. He came as a mediator, to end the war and to reconcile humanity with Me in peace, with much suffering even to the shameful death of the cross. So these are being crucified, making themselves the means with prayer and with words and with good and holy lives, setting it as an example before them. The precious stones of the virtues shine, as they bear and suffer sins with patience. These are the hooks with which they catch souls.⁶⁵

These "other *christs*" are conformed to Christ in their vigils, tears, and prayer but Catherine insists that the primary service these other *christs* offer is not their sufferings but their infinite desires for the salvation of the world. "Certainly, Mary, whom *Lumen Gentium* refers to as Christ's "generous associate above all others,"⁶⁷ would be for Catherine the prime instance of another *christ*. The Council Fathers perceive Mary's cooperation as being accomplished particularly through her interior disposition, that is, the "obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls."⁶⁸ The title of *christ* must be applied to Mary, for Catherine attests that just as Mary was sealed physically with the incar-

⁶⁵ "Veramente questi cotali si possono chiamare un altro Cristo crocifisso unigenito mio Figliuolo, perché àno preso a fare l'officio suo. Egli venne come tramezzatore, per levare la guerra e reconciliare in pace con meco l'uomo, col molto sostenere infino a l'obrobriosa morte della croce. Così questi cotali vanno crociati, facendosi mezzo con l'orazione e con la parola e con la buona e santa vita, ponendola per esempio dinanzi a loro. Rilucano le pietre preziose delle virtù con pazienza, portando e sopportando i loro difetti. Questi sono i lami con che essi pigliano l'anime" (*Il Dialogo*, CXLVI, 484).

⁶⁶ "Con le quali pene finite, all'infinito desiderio loro tu li vuoi dare refrigerio, cioè esaudire i prieghi ed impire i desiderii loro. Ma se patesseno solamente corporalmente, senza il desiderio sopradetto, non gli bastarebbe, né a essi né a gli altri, si come la passione nel Verbo, senza la virtù della deità non avrebbe soddisfatto alla salute della generatione umana. O rimediato ottimo, dāne adunque a noi di questi cristi, gli quali vivono continuamente in vigilie, in lacrime, in orationi per la salute del mondo. Tu gli chiami cristi tuoi perché sono conformati nel tuo unigenito Figliuolo" (*Oratio XII*, 152).

⁶⁷ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 61, in "Appendix IV," *Marian Studies XXXVII* (1986): 248.

⁶⁸ "She cooperated in an utterly singular way by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is mother to us in the order of grace." Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 61, in "Appendix IV," *Marian Studies XXXVII* (1986): 248. Pope John Paul II, in his Marian encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, identifies Mary's active sharing in Christ's mission with her obedience of faith: "Through this faith Mary is perfectly united with Christ in his self-emptying." Pope John Paul II, *Mother of the Redeemer*, art. 18 (Boston: Pauline Books, 1987), 25.

nate Jesus by the Holy Spirit in the Incarnation, so she was also sealed spiritually with "the imprint of the desire and of the love of our salvation."⁶⁹

Mary's Maternal Relationship with Us

The Church has, in recent years, stressed the relationship between Mary's spiritual maternity and Jesus' death. Pope John Paul II affirms that Mary's collaboration at the cross flowered into a maternal charity for those for whom He died: "Mary's motherhood itself underwent a singular transformation, becoming ever more imbued with 'burning charity' toward all those to whom Christ's mission was directed."⁷⁰ The pope explicitly identifies Jesus' death as the time in which Mary's motherhood of humanity is sealed: "Mary's motherhood of the human race...emerges from the definitive accomplishment of the Redeemer's Paschal Mystery. The Mother of Christ...stands at the very center of this mystery."⁷¹

Frequently, Catherine wraps her insights in metaphorical expressions. She affirms that, in some way, Mary received the crucified Christ into herself: "She, like a tree of mercy, receives in herself the consumed soul of the Son, which soul was wounded and hurt by the will of the Father. She, as a tree which has in herself the graft, is wounded by the sword of hatred and of love."⁷² The hatred for sin and the love for the honor of the Father and for the salvation of souls that was in Jesus passes into Mary. Catherine accords with the most recent teaching of the Church in that Mary's maternal solicitude for her spiritual children receives its deepest dimension at the cross.

Catherine attributes to Mary a role in giving Jesus to us at the cross. Not only does Mary receive Jesus' soul but she gives Jesus to us, our "gentle mother Mary, who for the honor of God and our salvation, gave us her Son, dead upon the wood

⁶⁹ "I see, O fire of charity, that there is another union here. He has the form of the flesh. And she as the warm wax, has received the imprint of the desire and of the love of our salvation, received from the seal and of the seal of the Holy Spirit. This seal and grafting has incarnated that divine eternal Word." "Io m'aveggo, o fuoco di carità, che ci à un'altra unione. Egli à la forma della carne, ed ella, come cera calda, à ricevuta la impronta del desiderio e dell'amore della nostra salute, ricevuta dal sugello e del sugello dello Spirito Santo, el quale sugello e inesto à incarnato quel Verbo eterno divino" (Letter 30, I, 112).

⁷⁰ John Paul II, *Ibid.*, art. 39, 56.

⁷¹ John Paul II, *Ibid.*, art. 23, 33.

⁷² "Ella, come arbore di misericordia, riceve in sè l'anima consumata del Figliuolo, la quale anima è vulnerata e ferita de la volontà del Padre; ella, come arbore che à in sè lo 'nnesso, è vulnerata col coltello dell'odio e dell'amore" (Letter 30, I, 112).

of the most holy cross."⁷³ In what way does Mary give Jesus? In the context, it would seem that Mary surrenders her desire to possess Him, letting Him be taken from her in his death and given to us. Mary desires that the Father's truth be fulfilled in us which necessitates that He be given up for us and then be given to us.

The Council specifies that Mary's "saving role" is a continuous process: "In her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son who still journey on earth."⁷⁴ The Council uses very active words when it speaks of those "in whose generation and education she cooperates with maternal love."⁷⁵ To understand how Catherine perceives Mary's assistance of believers in their redemption, we must recall Catherine's perception of the subjective redemption as a process of "sanctification,"⁷⁶ by which the person comes to fulfill the purpose for which God created her or him. In this progressive internalization, the memory, the understanding, and the will become increasingly attentive to the overwhelming love of God.⁷⁷

This cooperation with the effects of the blood, as we have seen, leads one to become another Christ. Catherine maintains the importance of experiencing that one is loved in this process: "And so through desire, affection, and union, love

⁷³ "[D]olce madre Maria, che per onore di Dio e salute nostra ci donò il Figliuolo, morto in sul legno della santissima croce" (Letter 240, IV, 31). Noffke places this letter in October or early November 1376.

⁷⁴ "For taken to heaven she has not laid aside this saving role, but by her manifold intercession continues to obtain for us gifts of eternal salvation. In her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son who still journey on earth." Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 62, in "Appendix IV," *Marian Studies XXXVII* (1986): 248-249.

⁷⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 63, in "Appendix IV," *Marian Studies XXXVII* (1986): 251. The Council recalls Augustine's words that Mary is "clearly the mother of Christ's members,...in bringing about the birth of the faithful in the Church, who are members of the head" (*De S. Virginitate*, 6; PL 40, 399). *Lumen Gentium*, 53, *ibid.*, 240. While Augustine apparently is referring to the objective birth of Christ-members implicit in the physical birth of Christ, the Council understands this giving birth in a subjective sense by which Mary cooperates with the spiritual rebirth of each individual believer.

⁷⁶ "His will is our sanctification. This is the truth and for this end God created us in order that we might be sanctified in Him to the praise and glory of His name and in order that we might enjoy and might taste His eternal vision." "La volontà sua è la nostra santificazione: questa è la verità; e per questo fine ci creò Dio, cioè perchè fussimo santificati in lui a loda e gloria del nome suo, e acciò che noi godessimo e gustassimo la eterna sua visione" (Letter 253, IV, 73).

⁷⁷ "So the memory retains My blessings and My goodness in itself. The understanding gazes into the indescribable love which I showed to you by means of My only-begotten Son, who is set as an object to the eye of your understanding in order that you may contemplate in Him the fire of My charity. And the will then may be gathered into them, loving and desiring Me who is its end." "[S]i che la memoria ritenga i benefizi miei e la mia bontà in sè; lo 'ntelletto riguardi nell'amore ineffabile il quale Io ò mostrato a voi col mezzo de l'unigenito mio Figliuolo, il quale ò posto per obietto all'occhio de l'intelletto vostro acciò che in lui riguardi il fuoco della mia carità, e la volontà allora sia congregata in loro, amando e desiderando me che so' suo fine" (*Il Dialogo*, LIV, 142).

makes of her another Himself.... It is the truth that through the affection of love the soul becomes another Him."⁷⁸

Mary, in a particular way, assists this process of sanctification. *Il Dialogo* tells us, "She is like a bait set by My goodness to take the creatures endowed with reason."⁷⁹ Mary attracts souls to God because her love has maternal characteristics of nurture, consolation, and strengthening which encourage the individual to believe in the merciful love of God. In order to deepen this consciousness, Catherine urges her readers to acknowledge their relationship with Mary through their daily actions. She advises Alberigo da Barbiano to "offer himself" to Mary each morning and evening.⁸⁰ She instructs Monna Colomba to "accompany Mary in seeking Jesus."⁸¹ And she directs the Prioress, Monna Pavola: "Keep in mind...and never let it go out of your heart or memory or your soul, that you were offered and given, you and all your daughters, to Mary. And beg her that she may present you and may give you to gentle Jesus, her Son."⁸²

Catherine believes that Mary actively assists souls in their process of sanctification. A characteristic principle of Catholic belief that is very discernible in Catherine is that souls go to God in relation to each other. So Catherine teaches that the virtues and the vices come to birth in relation to the neighbor.⁸³ And so too, gifts

⁷⁸ "[E] così per desiderio, affetto e unione l'amore ne fa un'altro sè.... È la verità che per affetto d'amore l'anima diventa un altro lui" (*Il Dialogo*, I, 2).

⁷⁹ "Ella è come una esca posta da la mia bontà a pigliare le creature che anno in loro ragione" (*Il Dialogo*, CXXXIX, 445).

⁸⁰ "Since you might watch yourselves badly, I want you and the others, always the first thing that you may do in the morning and in the evening, to offer yourselves to that sweet mother Mary, praying her that she may be your advocate and your defender. And for the love of that gentle and loving Word, Whom she bore in her womb, she may not bear that any deception be done to you but she manifests it in order that you may not be able to perish from deception. I am certain that making the holy beginning, as was said, and this sweet offering, that she will graciously accept your petition, as the mother of grace and of mercy which she is towards us sinners." "E perchè malagevolmente ci possiamo guardare, voglio che voi e gli altri sempre, la prima cosa che voi facciate da mane e da sera, si vi offeriate a quella dolce madre Maria, pregandola che ella sia avvocata e difenditrice vostra; e per amore di quel dolce e amoroso Verbo che ella portò nel ventre suo, che ella non sostenga che veruno inganno vi sia fatto, ma che 'l manifesti, acciocchè sotto inganno non possiate perire. Son certa che, facendo il santo principio, come detto è, e questa dolce offerta, che ella accetterà graziosamente la vostra petizione, come madre di grazia e di misericordia ch'ella è inverso di noi peccatori" (Letter 347, V, 168-169). Noffke places this letter on May 6, 1379.

⁸¹ "acompagnarci con Maria e cerchiallo con lei" (Letter 166, III, 48).

⁸² "Tenete a mente...e non v'esca mai del cuore nè della memoria nè dell'anima vostra, che sete stata offerta e donata, voi e tutte le vostre figliuole, a Maria, e pregatela che ella v'appresenti e doni al dolce Gesù Figliuolo suo" (Letter 144, II, 283).

⁸³ Catherine teaches a fellow *Mantellata*, Caterina di Scetto, that all the virtues come to birth through one's neighbor: "Know that each virtue receives life from love and love is acquired in love, that is lifting the eye of our intellect, and seeing how much we are loved by God. Seeing ourselves

are given to each in order that she or he may help her or his neighbor even as she or he relies on others' gifts: "I wanted the one to have need of the other, and that they might be My ministers to minister the graces and gifts they had received from Me."⁸⁴

For Catherine, this cooperation includes not only our services to each other on earth but also the assistance of those in heaven. The seriousness with which Catholics consider the Communion of Saints is well expressed by the Catholic members of the Lutheran Catholic Dialogue:

Catholic tradition holds that Jesus Christ alone is never merely alone. He is always found in the company of a whole range of his friends, both living and dead...these friends of Jesus Christ strengthen one's own sense of communion with Christ. It's all in the family, we might say; we are part of a people. Saints show us how the grace

loved, we are not able not to love, loving him, we will embrace the virtues through the affection of love, and with hate we despise vice. So you see that in God we conceive virtues, and in the neighbor they are brought to birth. Know well that in the need of your neighbor, you bring to birth the child, charity, which is within the soul, and in the injury that you receive from him, patience. You give him prayers, particularly for those who did you injury. And so we ought to do, if they are unfaithful to us, we ought to be faithful to them, and faithfully seek their salvation, loving them by grace and not for obligation. That is, you watch yourself not to love your neighbor for usefulness, because it would not be a faithful love, and you would not respond to the love that God bears for you. Because as God has loved you by grace so he wishes that you, not being able to render him this love, may render it to your neighbor, loving him by grace and not debt as I have said. Neither through injury nor because you saw the love towards you or the delight or the profit lessened, you ought not to lessen nor reduce the love towards your neighbor: but love him charitably, carrying and bearing his sins; care for the servants of God with great consolation and reverence." "Sappi che ogni virtù riceve vita dall'amore; e l'amore s'acquista nell'amore, cioè levando l'occhio dell'intelletto nostro, e riguardare quanto siamo amati da Dio. Vedendoci amare, non potiamo fare che noi non amiamo; amandolo, abbracciamo le virtù per affetto d'amore, e coll'odio spregiamo il vizio. Sicchè vedi che in Dio concipiamo le virtù, e nel prossimo si partoriscono. Sai bene che nella necessità del prossimo tuo, tu partorisci il figliuolo della carità, che è dentro nell'anima; e nella ingiuria che tu ricevi da lui, la pazienza. Tu gli doni l'orazione, singolarmente a coloro che ti fanno ingiuria. E così dobbiamo fare: se essi sono a noi infedeli, e noi dobbiamo essere a loro fedeli, e fedelmente cercare la loro salute; amarli di grazia, e non di debito. Cioè, che tu ti guardi da non amare il prossimo tuo per propria utilità; perchè non sarebbe amore fedele, e non risponderesti all'amore che Dio ti porta. Chè come Dio t'ha amata di grazia così vuole che, non potendogli tu rendere questo amore, tu il renda al prossimo tuo, amandolo di grazia, e non di debito, come detto è. Nè per ingiuria, nè perchè tu vedessi diminuire l'amore verso di te o il diletto o la propria utilità, non debbi tu diminuire nè scemare l'amore verso del tuo prossimo: ma amarlo caritativamente, portando e sopportando i difetti suoi; con grande consolazione e riverenza riguardare i servi di Dio" (Letter 50, I, 193-194). Noffke places this letter between October and November, 1377.

⁸⁴ "[Non l'ò poste tutte in uno, acciò che abbiate materia, per forza, d'usare la carità l'uno con l'altro; che bene potevo fare gli uomini dotati di ciò che bisognava, e per l'anima e per lo corpo;] ma Io volsi che l'uno avesse bisogno dell'altro, e fossero miei ministri a ministrare le grazie e doni che anno ricevuti da me" (*Il Dialogo*, VII, 23-24).

of God may work in a life; they give us bright patterns of holiness; they pray for us.... It is simply part of what it means to be Catholic, bonded with millions of other people not only throughout space in countries around the world, but also throughout time. Those who have gone before us in faith are still living members of the body of Christ and in some unimaginable way we are all connected.⁸⁵

Catherine describes the relationship that the souls in heaven have with those on earth:

Their desires always cry out before Me for the salvation of all the world because their lives ended in the charity of their neighbor. They have not left that love. Rather with that they passed through the gate of My only-begotten Son....The desire of the blessed is to see My honor in you wayfarers, who are pilgrims who always run towards your end of death. In the desire of My honor they desire your salvation, and so they continually pray to Me for you.⁸⁶

What is said of those in heaven is especially true of Mary. Catherine writes to the unbaptized Consiglio, informing him that Mary loves him⁸⁷ and that she compels Catherine to call him to baptism.⁸⁸ Catherine reiterates this spiritual maternity of Mary repeatedly. Mary is the "mother of compassion and mercy,"⁸⁹ the "advocate, mother of grace and mercy,"⁹⁰ the "gentle mother and gracious mother of mercy,"⁹¹ and "mother of the peace of the Son of God."⁹²

⁸⁵ *The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VIII*, ed. H. George Anderson, J. Francis Stafford, Joseph A. Burgess et al. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992), 117.

⁸⁶ "I loro desideri sempre gridano dinanzi da me per la salvazione di tutto quanto il mondo; perchè la vita loro fini nella carità del prossimo, non l'anno lassata, anco con essa passarono per la porta de l'unigenito mio Figliuolo.... Il desiderio dei beati è di vedere l'onore mio in voi viandanti, i quali sete peregrini che sempre corrite verso il termine della morte. Nel desiderio del mio onore desiderano la salute vostra, e però sempre mi pregano per voi." *Il Dialogo*, XLI, 102-103.

⁸⁷ "Do not despise the love that Mary has for you." "E none spregiare l'amore che t'à Maria" (Letter 15, I, 50).

⁸⁸ "Compelled by Christ crucified and by His sweet mother Mary." "Costretta da Cristo crocifisso e da la sua dolce madre Maria" (Letter 15, I, 49).

⁸⁹ Catherine implores the prostitute: "Run to that sweet Mary who is the mother of compassion and of mercy. She will lead you into the presence of her Son, showing Him for you the breasts with which she gave Him milk, inclining Him to give you mercy. You, as a daughter and servant, bought back with blood, enter then into the wounds of the Son of God, where you will find such a fire of ineffable charity, which will consume and will burn all your miseries and your defects." "Ricorri a quella dolce Maria che è madre di pietà e di misericordia. Ella ti menerà dinanzi alla presenza del figliuolo suo, mostrandogli per te il petto con che ella l'alattò, inchinandolo a farti misericordia. Tu, come figliuola e serva ricomperata di sangue, entra allora nelle piaghe del figliuolo di Dio; dove troverai tanto fuoco di ineffabile carità, che consumerà e arderà tutte le miserie e' difetti tuoi" (Letter 276, IV, 184). Noffke situates this letter between January 20 and May 10, 1376.

⁹⁰ "La quale è nostra avvocata, madre di grazia e di misericordia" (Letter 184, III, 120).

⁹¹ "Ella, come dolce madre e benigna madre di misericordia" (Letter 144, II, 283).

⁹² "Madre della pace del Figliuolo di Dio" (Letter 30, I, 114).

When she is instructing Raimondo to prepare himself for his encounters with the pope, with whom she and Raimondo had fallen out of favor, she urges him to stay in his cell before Mary and the holy cross. She concludes by telling him to "work for the honor of God and the salvation of souls, even to death."⁹³ Mary, as well as the cross, provides Raimondo the strength to labor for souls and even to lay down his life. Mary is a source of encouragement for those who labor for Christ, as Catherine counsels Raimondo in another letter: "Be confident because gentle Mary and the Truth will always be for you."⁹⁴

In recent centuries, there have been a number of missionary movements, congregations, and societies that have taken Mary as their patroness and model.⁹⁵ Another tradition, which may have been stronger in Catherine's time, emphasizes Mary more as a model of the contemplative life than as an inspiration for ministry. For instance, when Athanasius urges virgins to see themselves in Mary as in a mirror, he instructs them that when Mary did good works, she did not want to be seen by others and preferred her home to public places, taking to the quiet life as "a fly to honey." She was more intent looking into the Scriptures than out of her windows.⁹⁶

Ambrose portrays Mary in a similar way: "She was unaccustomed to go from home, except for divine service, and this with parents or kinsfolk. Busy in private at home, accompanied by others abroad, yet with no better guardian than herself....

⁹³ "And first stay in the cell before Mary and the most holy cross, with holiest and humble prayer, and with true knowledge of yourself and with living faith and a will to endure, and then go securely. And work that which you can for the honor of God and the salvation of souls, even to death." "[A voi dico, padre carissimo, che, quando è possibile a voi, siate dinanzi alla Santità sua con viril cuore, e senza alcuna pena o timore servile]; e prima siate in cella dinanzi a Maria e alla santissima croce, con santissima ed umile orazione, e con vero cognoscimento di voi, e con viva fede e volontà di sostenere; e poi andare sicuramente. E adoperate ciò che si può per onore di Dio e salute dell'anime, infino alla morte" (Letter 267, IV, 146-147).

⁹⁴ "Confidatevi; chè Maria dolce e la Verità sarà per voi sempre" (Letter 344, V, 155).

⁹⁵ The relationship between Mary and mission is not entirely recent. Some of the early writings of the Dominican Order recount visions, said to predate the Order, in which Mary pleads with Christ for preachers who would renew the world.

⁹⁶ "Maintenant donc, que la vie de Marie, qui engendra Dieu, soit à vous toutes, comme si elle était écrite, l'im[age à laquelle chacune conferma] sa virginité. Il est préférable, en effet, que vous vous connaissiez vous-mêmes par elle comme en un miroir, et ainsi vous parer.... Elle aimant, en effet, les bonnes œuvres tout en remplissant ses devoirs et en ayant des pensées droites sur la foi et la pureté. Elle ne désirait pas être vue par les hommes, mais elle privait Dieu d'être son examinateur. Elle n'avait pas non plus hâte de sortir de chez elle, et elle ne connaissait aucunement les places publiques, mais elle demeurait assidûment chez elle, vivant retirée et se rendant semblable à une mouche à miel.... Elle ne se préoccupait pas de regarder par la fenêtre, mais dans les Écritures." St. Athanasius, *La Lettre aux Vierges*; CSCO, 151, 59-60. (The extant text is corrupt and is partially reconstructed by the editors.)

She did not desire any women as companions, who had the companionship of good thoughts. Moreover, she seemed to herself to be less alone when she was alone."⁹⁷

Both the contemplative and the active lives can find a model in Mary and many in the Consecrated Life aspire to imitate both aspects. What is unusual about Catherine is that Mary is so identified with active ministry at a time when women's involvement with society was often restricted. However, Catherine's perspective is not surprising when we consider the breadth of Catherine's own ministry.

Catherine, very incisively, sees Mary as the one who inspires others to be "eaters and tasters of souls." The Vatican Council proposes Mary's own motherly love as an inspiration for those who minister: "During her lifetime the Virgin was a model of that maternal affection with which all should be animated who cooperate in the apostolic mission of the Church for the rebirth of mankind."⁹⁸

Catherine's association of Mary with mission is always within the context of knowledge of self and of God's goodness. For Catherine, progress in one's relationship with God necessarily leads to ministry to others. Certainly the articulation by the Second Vatican Council of the universal call to holiness⁹⁹ and the call of all the baptized to the apostolate¹⁰⁰ are well founded in Paul's description of the various gifts in the Church (1 Cor. 12:4-11). Perhaps the universal nature of these calls was less evident to others in the troubled fourteenth century and yet it was clear to Catherine. She challenges her readers – whether they be tailors, widows, military leaders, lawyers, or queens – to holiness and service, even as she does religious and clergy.

Catherine very decisively sets Mary as the one who animates those who minister. Mary is the one who sends out the apostles to continue her Son's work of reconciling humanity to the Father. This post-Pentecostal period of Mary's life has not been reflected upon by many other authors, beyond the apocryphal *Transitus* accounts. Catherine's portrayal of Mary's relationship with the apostles and other members of the early Church offers a rich area for consideration.

⁹⁷ Ambrose, *Concerning Virgins*, II, 9-10, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Second Series), vol. X, ed. Philip Schaff & Henry Wace (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 375; PL 16, 209.

⁹⁸ "In her apostolic work too the Church rightly looks to her who brought forth Christ, by design conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin so that through the Church he might be born and grow in the hearts of the faithful." Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 65, in "Appendix IV," *Marian Studies* XXXVII (1986): 253-254. "The Church, in turn, contemplating her mysterious holiness, imitating her charity, and faithfully fulfilling the Father's will, herself becomes mother by faithfully receiving the word of God: for by preaching and baptism she brings forth to new and immortal life children conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God. She also is the virgin who keeps pure and intact the faith pledged to her Spouse, and imitating the Mother of her Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit, she preserves a faith intact, a solid hope, a sincere charity." *Ibid.*, art. 64, 252.

⁹⁹ See *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter V.

¹⁰⁰ See *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter IV.

It is our hope that Catherine's voice will be heard increasingly in this twenty-first century, and that the relevance of Catherine's mariology, as it complements her soteriology, will be better appreciated. There are reasons why engaging Catherine in her writings may seem daunting. The fact that a large amount of her thought is found not only in her book, *Il Dialogo*, but also in a number of letters and prayers can be discouraging. Also, Catherine's use of images can be perplexing, and her repetition and enhancing of metaphors and expressions can be difficult to follow. Furthermore, her biographers' tales of her extreme asceticism and startling mystical experiences may easily distract from her message, and unfortunately, for many contemporary readers, provide reason to dismiss her real significance. Certainly the manner in which she lived bears the marks of her time, and aspects of her thought do as well, yet her essential insights manifest the crispness and clarity of one who has lived the Gospel intensely.

Hopefully, by identifying Catherine's key principles we have uncovered profound theological perceptions. Catherine's insight is well taken that there is a correlation between the vitality of our Christianity and our appreciation of God's love. Her vivid awareness of Christ crucified, the personification of God's hunger for humanity, is surely the antidote to the redemption considered as an abstraction. In a particularly clear way, Catherine articulates the fundamental basis of a life of discipleship, rooted in self-knowledge, that leads to service. Her recognition that love follows understanding, challenges Christians to proclaim the truth of the faith.

The consistency with which she places Mary within the context of the objective and subjective aspects of redemption not only accords with the Patristic perception but also with that of recent conciliar and magisterial teaching on Mary. And the relationship she develops between devotion to Mary and the Christian call to labor for the salvation of souls has never been more timely.

During a visit to Siena, Pope John Paul II acknowledged Catherine's fundamental Marian insight: "Among the other titles that recommend her to our admiration, Catherine also has that of being for us 'teacher of true Marian piety.' In singing of our heavenly Mother, she reaches peaks of exalted poetry, and she frames, as is right, the mystery of Mary in the very mystery of Christ, her Son."¹⁰¹

Catherine's voice needs to be heard in this new millennium. Both in her lifetime and in our time, Catherine's words have the ability to energize. Catherine's influence

¹⁰¹ "Tra gli altri titoli che la raccomandano alla nostra ammirazione, Caterina ha anche quello di esserci' maestra di vera piet  mariana: nel cantare la nostra Madre celeste, ella trova accenti di alta poesia ed inquadra - com'  giusto - il misterio di Maria nel misterio stesso del Cristo, suo Figlio." Giovanni Paolo II, "Caterina   maestra di vera piet  mariana," *Quaderni Cateriniani* 27 (1980): 15. These excerpts are from the pope's *Angelus* talk at the Piazza del Campo in Siena on September 14, 1980.

on Gregory XI's return to Rome from Avignon can be overstated as though she alone was responsible, yet it is apparent that this charismatic woman spurred the vacillating pontiff to action. It is not surprising that there is a renewed interest in Catherine. The words of this woman who could say "My nature is fire" animate us today as they did the people of her time. It is hoped that others will share Catherine's conviction that Mary served the redemptive process as "the temple of the Trinity, bearer of the fire, bringer of mercy, and germinator of the fruit."¹⁰²

Catherine's contribution to mariology lies in her keen awareness of the relationship of Mary to the redemption and in her perception that Mary animates those who are being redeemed to become "other *christs*" and be "eaters and tasters of souls." Her evangelical mariology is well expressed in her words to Monna Pavola: "May you all be faithful...[and] run courageously, taking that sweet affection of Mary, that is, that you always seek the honor of God and the salvation of souls.... Strive, through love and through holy desire, to eat and give birth to souls in the presence of God."¹⁰³

¹⁰² "O Maria, Maria tempio della Trinità o Maria portatrice del fuoco! Maria porgetrice de misericordia, Maria germinatrice del fructo" (*Oratio* XI, 118).

¹⁰³ "Siate tutte fedeli...ma virilmente corrite, pigliando quello affetto dolce di Maria, cioè che sempre cerciate l'onore di Dio e la salute dell'anima.... Studiate, per amore e per santo desiderio, di mangiare e parturire anime nel conspetto di Dio" (Letter 144, II, 283).

APPENDIX

This appendix offers supplementary texts for Chapter 3. These additional quotations provide the reader with further information to the references already given in the footnotes.

1. In *Il Processo*, Caffarini urges those who take Catherine as a model to imitate Catherine's use of the 'Ave Maria': "Our blessed young virgin Catherine, as if heavenly inspired, when she was around five years old was discovered to have her whole wonderful devotion before everything else to the mother of Christ herself. For, as she was frequently offering the same angelic salutations, on one occasion there was a singular miracle in which this virgin was lifted from the earth, as she was offering them to the mother of Christ, according to what was recorded in the beginning of her *Legenda*. There also it is said first, that while this same one was still a girl, she taught girls the Hail Mary and the Our Father. So for the sake of those beginning to imitate this standard, the young virgin, before everything, let us, quickly in the beginning of preaching, try asking for grace from the Mother of God, who is at the same time the Virgin dispenser of all graces. Let us humbly begin the angelic salutation as devoutly as we are able as a gift we offer to the most gracious one, saying, 'Ave.'"

[V]irgo nostra beata Catherina novella tanquam celitus inspirata cum esset etatis annorum v vel circiter reperta est ante omnia ad ipsam Christi matrem totam suam habere devotionem mirabilem quia salutationes angelicas eidem offerere frequentius cum concursu singularis miraculi, uptote aliquando elevationis virginis eiusdem a terra, cum matri Christi illas offerret, prout in principio tangitur legende sue, ubi etiam habetur quod primum, quod ipsa docuit etiam existens puella puellas fuit Ave Maria cum Pater Noster. Qua propter iuxta nostrum modulum hanc novellam virginem imitari incipientes pro gratia quam intendimus impetranda ante omnia in primo numero huius predicationis ad supradictam Dei matrem simul et virginem gratiarum omnium collatricem humiliter accedamus eique salutationem angelicam quam devotius possumus pro munere sibi gratissimo offeramus, dicentes: "Ave." *Processo Castellano*, 107.

2. The inspiration for *Il Dialogo* came on the "Day of Mary": "And waiting until the morning came to have the Mass, which was the day of Mary. And the hour of the Mass having come, she sat in her place with true knowledge of herself, ashamed of herself before God for her imperfection. And rising above herself with anxious desire, and reflecting with the eye of the understanding on the eternal Truth, she then asked four questions, holding herself and her father [director] before the spouse of Truth."

E aspettando che venisse la mattina per avere la Messa, che era il di di Maria; e, venuta l'ora della Messa, si pose nel luogo suo con vero cognoscimento di sè, vergognandosi dinanzi da Dio della sua imperfezione. Levando sè sopra di sè con ansietato desiderio, e speculando con l'occhio dell'intelletto nella Verità eterna, dimandava ine quattro petizioni, tenendo sè e il padre suo dinanzi alla

sposa della Verità (Letter 272, IV, 159-160). Noffke places this letter on October 10, 1377, or shortly afterwards.

3. Caffarini also gave testimony to the Virgin Mary's role in Catherine's decision to vow her chastity: "Such was the excellence of the first vision recounted in the preceding chapter, that only the love of Christ and His Mother possessed the heart of the virgin. And when, taught by God, she realized how pleasing purity was to Christ and that His mother was the first who came to the virginal life and vowed virginity to God, the Mother of God helping her, the virgin being seven, she maturely determined to offer the vow that she might be more pleasing to the Son and to His mother. Choosing a secret place, having directed prayer to the Mother of God, she solemnly made the vow as she consecrated herself, and promised to preserve her virginity unimpaired to Christ and to His most beloved Mother."

Tanta fuit excellentia prime visionis in precedenti capitulo recitate, quod solus amor Christi et genitricis eiusdem cor virginis possidebat. Cumque desuper docta foret quantum puritas Christo placeret et quod mater eius prima fuit que vitam virgineam adinvenit ac virginitatem Deo devovit, eadem Dei genitrice mediante, virgo septennis existens, mature deliberat prefatum votum offerre Deo ut matri et filio gratior efficiatur; secretoque loco electo, et oratione directa ad Dei matrem, prefatum votum solemniter, prout, sibi libuit, fecit, virginitatemque illibatam Christo et eius amantissime matri servare promisit. Thomas Antonii de Senis [Tommaso Nacci Caffarini], *Legenda Minor*, I, 13 (Recensio Nova).

4. In her last letter to him, Catherine assures Raimondo of her prayers for him: "I have begged and I beg His mercy that He may fulfill His will in me, that He may leave neither you nor the others orphans. But always may He direct you by the way of the teaching of the truth, with true and most perfect light. I am certain that He will do it. Now I beg and constrain you, father and son given to me by that sweet mother Mary, that if you feel that God turns the eye of His mercy towards me, He wishes to renew your life. And as one dead to every sensitive feeling, may you cast yourself into this ship of the holy Church."

Ho pregato e prego la sua misericordia, che compia la sua volontà in me; e che voi, nè gli altri, lassi orfani. Ma sempre vi drizzi per la via della dottrina della verità, con vero e perfettissimo lume. Son certa che egli il farà. Ora prego e costringo voi, padre e figliuolo dato da quella dolce madre Maria, che, se voi sentite che Dio volla l'occhio della sua misericordia verso di me, vuole rinovellare la vita vostra; e, come morto ad ogni sentimento sensitivo, voi vi gittiate in questa navicella della santa Chiesa (Letter 373, V, 290). Noffke sets this letter on February 15, 1380.

5. Raimondo recounts how Catherine sought Mary's protection in the process of vowing her virginity: "So, on a certain day, choosing a secret place where no one could hear, she was able to speak out, kneeling on both knees, she addressed the blessed Virgin most devoutly and humbly: 'O most blessed and most sacred Virgin, you were the first among women to consecrate your virginity, vowing it perpetually to the Lord, by whom, so graciously, you were made the mother of His only begotten Son. I entreat your inexpressible compassion that you not consider my merits nor my smallness, that you will deign to give me such grace, that you give me as a spouse, Him, whom I desire with all my

inmost soul, your most sacred Son, our only Lord Jesus Christ. And I promise Him and you that I will never accept another spouse, and I will preserve my virginity for Him for ever according to my ability.”

[Q]uadam die secretum eligens locum, in quo nullo audiente, posset etiam altius verba proferre; flexis utriusque hominis genibus, sic est beatam Virginem devotissime ac humiliter allocuta: “O beatissima ac sacratissima Virgo, quae prima inter mulieres Domino virginitatem perpetuo devovens consecrasti, a quo tam gratiose facta es mater unigeniti Filii ejus; tuam ineffabilem pietatem exoro, ut meis meritis non attentis, nec exiguitate mea considerata, digneris mihi tantam gratiam facere, quod in sponsum mihi des illum, quem totis animae meae visceribus concupisco, super sacratissimum filium tuum, unicum Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum: et ego promitto ei et tibi, quod numquam alium sponsum admittam, virginitatemque meam juxta meum modulum servabo ei perpetuo illibatam.” Raymundus de Vineis (da Capua), *Vita*, I, III, xxxv, 871.

6. Catherine reflects on Mary’s hesitant response to the angel: “O Mary, because you had this light, you were not foolish but prudent. So with prudence you wished to inquire from the angel how what he announced to you might be possible. And did you not know that this was possible to the all-powerful God? Certainly so, without any doubt. Then why did you say, ‘because I do not know man?’ Not because you were lacking in faith, rather, because in your profound humility you considered your unworthiness, but not that you doubted that this was possible to God. Mary, were you disturbed at the word of the angel through fear? It does not seem that if I consider in the light you were disturbed, although you showed some movement of wonderment and disturbance. Then, what did you wonder? At the great goodness of God which you saw, and considering yourself, how unworthy you knew yourself to be of such a great grace you were astonished. Then, in the consideration of your unworthiness and your weakness, and of the ineffable grace of God you became amazed and astonished. So, asking with prudence, you showed your profound humility, and as was said, you had not fear but wonder at the boundless goodness and charity of God, for the lowliness and smallness of your virtue.”

O Maria, perché tu avesti questo lume, però non fusti stolta ma prudente, unde con prudenzia volesti investigare da l’angelo come fusse possibile quello che t’anunciava. E non sapevi tu che questo era possibile a l’oni-potente Dio? Certo sì, senza veruna dubitazione. Dunque perchè dicevi “quoniam virum non cognosco?” Non perchè tu mancassi in fede, ma per la tua profonda umilità, considerando la indignità tua; ma non che tu dubitassi che questo fusse possibile appo Dio. Maria, fusti tu conturbata nella parola de l’angelo per paura? Non pare, se io rguardo nel lume, che per paura tu fussi conturbata, benchè tu mostrassi alcuno atto d’ammirazione ed alcuna conturbazione. Adunque, di che ti maravigli? Della grande bontà di Dio la quale tu vedevi; e considerando te medesima, quanto tu ti cognoscevi indegna a tanta grazia eri stupefatta; dunque nella considerazione della indegnità e infermità tua e della ineffabile grazia di Dio diventasti ammirata e stupefatta. Così adimandando tu con prudenzia dimostri la profonda umilità tua; e, come detto è, non avesti timore, ma ammirazione della smisurata bontà e carità di Dio per la bassezza e piccolezza della virtù tua (*Oratio XI*, 120-122).

7. The angel waits for Mary's response, demonstrating God's respect for the human will: "In these things the human dignity is shown, through which God has worked so much and such great things. Even more in you, O Mary, the strength and freedom of humanity is shown today because after the deliberation of such and so great a council, the angel is sent to you to announce to you the mystery of the divine council and to seek your will. And the Son of God did not descend into your womb before you had consented with your will. He waited at the door of your will that you might open to him. For He wished to come into you and He would never have entered you unless you had opened, saying, 'Here is the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me, according to your word.' Then surely the strength and liberty of the will is shown because neither any good nor bad is able to be done without the will. And neither the devil nor anyone is able to force it to the guilt of deadly sin if it does not wish. Nor yet is it able to be forced to work any good more than it wills, so that the human will is free because no one is able to force it to evil nor to good if it does not wish. O Mary, the eternal Godhead knocked at your door, but if you had not opened the door of your will, God would not be incarnate in you. Be ashamed, my soul, seeing that today, God is become a relative with you in Mary. Today He has shown you that although He made you without you, you will not be saved without yourself. So, as I said, today, God knocks at the door of the will and waits that she may open to Him."

In queste cose si dimostra la dignità de l'uomo, per cui Dio ha operate tante e si grandi cose. In te ancora, o Maria, si dimostra oggi la fortezza e libertà de l'uomo, perché, doppo la deliberazione di tanto e sì grande consiglio, è mandato a te l'angelo ad annunciarti el misterio del consiglio divino e cercare la volontà tua, e non discese nel ventre tuo il Figliuolo di Dio prima che tu el consentissi con la volontà tua. Aspettava alla porta della tua volontà che tu gli aprissi, ché voleva venire in te; e giamai non vi sarebbe intrato se tu non gli avessi aperto dicendo: "Ecco l'ancilla del Signore, sia fatto a me secondo la parola tua". Dunque manifestamente si dimostra la fortezza e libertà della volontà; ché né bene né male veruno si può fare senza essa volontà; e non è demonio né creatura che possa constringerla a colpa di peccato mortale se ella non vuole, né ancora può essere costretta ad adoperare veruno bene più che ella si voglia, sì che la volontà de l'uomo è libera, ché neuno la può constringere a male né a bene se ella non vuole. Picchiava, o Maria, a la porta tua la deità eterna, ma se tu non avessi aperto l'uscio della volontà tua non sarebbe Dio incarnato in te. Vergognati, anima mia, vedendo che Dio oggi ha fatto parentado con teo in Maria. Oggi t'è mostrato che benché tu sia fatta senza te non sarai salvata senza te, unde, come detto è, oggi bussa Dio a la porta della volontà e aspetta che ella gli apra (*Oratio XI*, 126-128).

8. Catherine considers the union of Jesus' natures accomplished in Mary's womb to be eternal: "O Mary, blessed are you among all the women of the ages, for today, you have given us of your flour. Today, the Godhead is united and kneaded with our humanity so strongly that this union is never able to be separated neither through death nor through our ingratitude. Rather, the Godhead was always united, even with the body in the sepulcher and with the soul in limbo, and together with the soul and with the body in Christ. Through such a way this relationship was established and joined, that it never was divided, so will it never be broken up."

O Maria, benedetta sia tu tra tutte le femine in seculum seculi, ché oggi tu ci hai dato della farina tua. Oggi la deità è unita ed impastata con l'umanità nostra sì fortemente che mai non si poté separare, né per morte né per nostra ingratitudine, questa unione, anco sempre fu unita la deità, eciando col corpo nel sepolcro e con l'anima nel limbo, e insieme con l'anima e con lo corpo in Cristo. Per si fatto modo fu contratto e congiunto questo parentado, che si come mai non fu diviso, così in perpetuo mai non discioglierà (*Oratio XI*, 132).

9. Catherine encourages her mother, Monna Lapa, to follow Mary's example in seeking the honor of God and the salvation of humanity: "Acting for the honor of God, is not without an increase of grace and virtue in my soul, so that it is certainly true, you being the most sweet mother, a lover more of my soul than my body, you will be consoled and not disconsolate. I wish that you may learn from that gentle mother Mary, who for the honor of God and our salvation gave us her Son, dead upon the wood of the most holy cross. And Mary remaining alone, after Christ had gone up into heaven, she remained with the holy disciples. Although Mary and the disciples had great consolation and the departure was disconsolating, nevertheless for the glory and praise of her Son and for the good of all the world, she consented and wished that they might part. And she chose their departure with toil quicker than the consolation of their remaining, and it was only for the love which she had for the honor of God and our salvation. Now, from her, I wish that you may learn, dearest mother. You know that it is necessary for me to follow the will of God and I know that you wish that I follow it."

Facendo l'onore di Dio, non è senza accrescimento di gratia e di virtù nell'anima mia: si ch'è bene vero che, sendo voi, dolcissima madre, amatrice più dell'anima che del corpo, sarete consolata e none sconsolata. Io voglio che impariate da quella dolce madre Maria, che per onore di Dio e salute nostra ci donò il Figliuolo, morto in sul legno della santissima croce. E rimanendo Maria sola, poi che Cristo fu salito in cielo, rimase co' li discepoli santi: e poniamo che Maria e' discepoli avessero grande consolatione e il partire fusse sconsolatione, nondimeno, per gloria e lode del Figliuolo suo e per bene di tutto l'universo mondo, ella consenti e volse ch'eglino si partisseno. E più tosto elege la partita loro con fatica che la consolatione dello stare, e fu solo per amore ch'ella aveva all'onore di Dio e alla salute nostra. Ora da lei voglio che impariate, carissima madre. Voi sapete che a me conviene seguitare la volontà di Dio; e io so che voi volete ch'io la sèguiti (*Letter 240, IV*, 31-32). Noffke places this letter in October or early November 1376.

10. Catherine urges Raimondo to consider the doctrine of Mary: "And with the garment of patience, which we said above, she perseveres even to the end, as she goes up to heaven. Although all the virtues, outside of charity, which is the garment of patience, all remain below, she enters within as the lady, nevertheless she draws out to herself the fruit of all the virtues, and especially the fruit of patience, because it is totally incorporated into charity. Indeed it is the marrow of charity so it is shown clothed with love and not naked. Therefore patience without charity would not be a virtue. But because true and perfect love is in the soul, it has shown the sign of suffering pains and shame, scorn and abuse, temptations of the devil and the stimulus of the flesh, the tongues of criticism and the flatteries of the double heart which has one thing in the heart and shows another on the tongue, and all this he has passed with true and holy patience, and with true solicitude to serve God and neighbor. And he is made a dweller

of the cell of knowledge of self, in which cell stays the knowledge of the goodness of God in himself. There he grows fat and there he is delighted. In his cell he eats with sufferings the food of souls, and so he has placed his table upon the cross. In the cell of glory and praise of the name of God, he reposes, and there he has made his bed. And so he has found the table and the food and the server, that is the Holy Spirit and the honor of the eternal Father, where he reposes. And since he has found the cell within so sweetly, he procures it from outside again, as it is possible for him. Remember, dearest father and negligent son, the doctrine of Mary, and of that of Gentle First Truth. Know that it is necessary for you to stay in knowledge of yourself and to offer humble and continuous prayers. It is necessary for you to study the cell, and to know the truth and to flee every conversation except what is of necessity for the salvation of souls, to draw them out from the hands of the devil with holy confession."

E col vestimento della pazienza, che è detto di sopra, persevera infino all'ultimo, che sale in cielo. Benchè tutte le virtù, fuore della carità, che è il vestimento della pazienza, rimangono tutte di sotto, ed ella entra dentro come donna; nondimeno ella trae a sè il frutto di tutte le virtù, e singolarmente il frutto della pazienza, perocchè ella è tutta incorporata nella carità; anco, è il mirollo della carità, perocchè s'è manifestata vestita d'amore, e non nuda. Perocchè pazienza senza carità già non sarebbe virtù. Ma perchè l'amore vero e perfetto è nell'anima, ha mostrato il segno del sostenere pene e obrobrio, scherni e villanie, tentazioni del dimonio e lo stimolo della carne, le lingue de' mormoratori e le lusinghe del cuore doppio, che ha una in cuore e un'altra mostra in lingua; e tutte le ha passate con vera e santa pazienza, e con vera sollicitudine di servire a Dio e al prossimo suo. Ed è fatto abitatore della cella del cognoscimento di sè; nella quale cella sta la cella del cognoscimento della bontà di Dio in sè. Ine ingrassa, e ine si diletta. Nella cella sua mangia con pena el cibo dell'anime: e così ha posta la mensa in su la croce. Nella cella della gloria e loda del nome di Dio si riposa; e ine ha fatto il letto suo. E così ha trovata la mensa e 'l cibo e servitore, cioè lo Spirito Santo, e l'onore del Padre eterno, dove si riposa. E poichè ha trovata la cella dentro così dolcemente, ed egli la procaccia di fuore ancora, quanto gli è possibile. Ricordivi, carissimo padre e negligente figliuolo, della dottrina di Maria, e di quella della dolce prima Verità. Sapete che vi conviene stare nel cognoscimento di voi; e offerire umili e continue orazioni. E conviensi studiare la cella, e cognoscere la verità e fuggire ogni conversazione, se non quella che è di necessità per salute dell'anime, per trarle dalle mani delle dimonia con la santa confessione (Letter 104, II, 138-139). Noffke places this letter between November and December 1377.

11. Catherine tries to convince Monna Colomba to seek Christ in self-knowledge: "Let us see that when our Savior was lost in the temple, while going to the feast, Mary was not able to find Him neither among the friends nor among the relatives, but found Him in the temple as He disputed with the doctors. And this was done to give an example to us, because He is our rule and way, which we ought to follow. Hear that He says that He was lost going to the feast. You know dearest sister, as He said, God is not found at the feasts, nor at dances, nor in games, nor in weddings, nor in pleasures. Indeed going there is the instrument and the cause of losing Him, falling into many sins and defects, and in many pleasures of disordered delight. Since this is the reason that has made us lose God through grace, is there a way for us to find Him again? Yes, for us to accompany Mary

and seek Him with her, that is with bitterness, sorrow, and displeasure for the sins committed against our Creator by condescending to the will of creatures. It is necessary for us then to go to the temple and there He is found. Let us lift up our hearts and our affections and our desire with this company of bitterness, and go to the temple of our soul, and there we know ourselves. Then, knowing ourselves not to have being of ourselves, we will know the goodness of God in ourselves, Who is that One Who is."

Vediamo che quando el nostro Salvatore si smarrì nel tempio andando alla festa, Maria non lo potè trovare nè tra gli amici nè tra parenti, ma trovollo nel tempio che disputava co' dottori, e questo fece per dare esempio a noi, però che egli era nostra regola e via, la quale noi doviamo seguire. Odi che dice che si smarrì andando alla festa: sappiate, dilette suora, che come detto è, Dio non si truova alle feste, nè a balli o giuochi o a nozze o a delitie, anco andandovi è strumento e cagione di perderlo, cadendo in molti peccati e difetti, e in molti piacerimenti di disordenati dilette. Poi che questa è la cagione che ci à fatto smarrire Dio per gratia, ecci modo di ritrovarlo? sì: acompagnarci con Maria e cerchiallo con lei, cioè con l'amaritudine, dolore e dispiacimento della colpa commessa contra al nostro creatore per conscondere alla volontà delle creature. Convienci dunque andare al tempio, ed ine si truova. Levisi el cuore e l'affetto e 'l desiderio nostro con questa compagnia dell'amaritudine, e vada al tempio dell'anima sua, e ine cognosca sè medesima. Allora, cognoscendo sè medesima non essere, cognoscerà la bontà di Dio in sè, che è colui che è (Letter 166, III, 48-49). Noffke puts this letter between October 1375, and January 1376.

12. Catherine counsels Monna Agnese Malavolti to accept God's will humbly, as Mary did: "Pride displeases Him and humility pleases Him. And He was so pleased with the virtue of humility of Mary, that He was constrained through His goodness to give to her the Word, His only-begotten Son, and she was that sweet mother who gave Him to us. You certainly know, that as long as Mary had not showed with the sound of her word her humility and her will saying, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Your word,' the Son of God was not made incarnate in her, but when she had said it, she conceived in herself that sweet and immaculate Lamb, showing to us in this the first sweet Truth, how excellent is this small virtue, and how much the soul receives who with humility offers and gives her will to the Creator. So then, in time of labors and of persecutions, insults, abuse, and ridicule, received from one's neighbor, in struggles of the mind, and privation of spiritual and temporal consolations by the Creator and by creatures (by the Creator through kindness, when He draws away to Himself the feeling of the mind, that then He does not seem any more to be with the soul, such are the battles and the pains which it has, and from creatures through conversations and recreations, when she seems to love them more though she is not loved), in all these things, I say, the soul perfected with humility says 'My Lord, behold your handmaid.' Let it be done to me according to Your will, and not according to what I want in my feelings. And so she casts the odor of patience to the Creator and to creatures and to herself. She tastes the peace and quiet of the mind, and in the war she has found peace because she has taken away from herself the selfish will founded on pride, and has conceived in her soul the divine grace. She carries in the breast of her mind, Christ crucified, and she delights in the wounds of Christ crucified, and does not seek to know other than Christ crucified, and her bed is the cross of Christ crucified. There she drowns her own will and she becomes humble and obedient. Because there is not obedience without hu-

mility, and there is not humility without charity. And this she finds in the Word, because with obedience to the Father, and with humility He runs to the shameful death of the cross, nailing and binding Himself with the nail and with the bonds of charity, and suffering with such patience that He did not utter His cry with complaint."

Dispiacegli la superbia, e piacegli l'umiltà. E in tanto gli piacque la virtù dell'umiltà di Maria, che fu costretto per la bontà sua di donare a lei il Verbo dall'unigenito suo figliuolo; ed ella fu quella dolce Madre che il donò a noi. Sapete bene, che infino che Maria non mostrò col suono della parola l'umiltà e la volontà sua, dicendi: "Ecce Ancilla Domini; sia fatto a me secondo la parola tua;" il figliuolo di Dio non incarnò in lei; ma, detta che ella l'ebbe, concepette in sè quello dolce e immacolato Agnello, mostrando in questo a noi la prima dolce Verità, quanto è eccellente questa virtù piccola, e quanto riceve l'anima che con umiltà offera e dona la volontà sua al Creatore. Così, dunque, nel tempo delle fatiche e della persecuzioni, ingiurie, strazi e villanie, ricevendole dal prossimo suo, e battaglie di mente, e privazione di consolazioni spirituali e temporali, dal Creatore e dalla creature (dal Creatore per dolcezza, quando ritrae a sè il sentimento della mente; che non pare allora che più sia dell'anima, tante son le battaglie e le pene che ha; e dalle creature per conversazione e ricreazione, parendole più amare che ella non è amata); in tutte queste cose, dico che l'anima perfetta con la umiltà dice: "Signore mio, ecco l'Ancilla tua. Sia fatto in me secondo la tua volontà, e non secondo quello che voglio io sensitivamente." E così gitta l'odore della pazienza verso del Creatore e della creatura e di sè medesima. Gusta la pace e la quiete della mente; e nella guerra ha trovata la pace, perocchè ha tolto di sè la propria volontà fondata nella superbia, ed ha concepito nell'anima mia la divina Grazia. E porta nel petto della mente sua Cristo crocifisso, e diletta nelle piaghe di Cristo crocifisso, e non cerca di sapere altro che Cristo crocifisso; e il suo letto è la croce di Cristo crocifisso. Ine annega la sua volontà, e diventa umile e obbediente. Perocchè non è obediencia senza umiltà, e non umiltà senza carità. E questo truova nel Verbo; perocchè con l'obediencia del Padre, e con l'umiltà corre all'obbroriosa morte della croce, conficcandosi e legandosi col chiovo e col legame della carità, e sostenendo con tanta pazienza che non è udito il grido suo per mormorazione (Letter 38, I, 153-154). Noffke suggests that this letter was written in October 1377.

13. Catherine urges her mother to follow the example of Mary, who, after Pentecost, let the apostles leave her in order that they might preach the Gospel: "I, Catherine, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, write to you in his precious blood, with the desire to see you clothed in the fire of divine charity that through such a way you may bear with true patience every suffering and torment, hunger and thirst, persecution and injury, insult, abuse, ridicule, and every thing, learning from the slain and consumed Lamb, who with such a fire of love ran to the shameful death of the cross. You accompany then the sweetest mother Mary, who, in order that the holy disciples might seek the honor of God and the salvation of souls, following the footsteps of her sweet Son, consents that the disciples depart from her presence, though it happens she loved them immeasurably, and she remains alone, a guest and a pilgrim. And the disciples who loved her immensely, yet they leave her with joy, bearing each suffering for the honor of God and they go among tyrants, bearing many persecutions. And if you asked them, 'Why do

you carry yourselves so joyfully and you part yourselves from Mary?' They would respond, 'Because we have lost ourselves and we are enamored with the honor of God and of the salvation of souls.' So I wish then, dearest mother and daughter, that you do. And if until now you had not been, I wish that you be kindled in the fire of divine charity, seeking always the honor of God and the salvation of souls. Otherwise you would remain in the greatest suffering and tribulations and you would keep me with you. You know, dearest mother, that I, miserable daughter, am not put on earth for anything other, for this my Creator has chosen me I know that you are content that I obey Him."

Io Catarina, serva e schiava de' servi di Gesù Cristo, scrivo a voi nel prezioso sangue suo, con desiderio di vedervi vestite del fuoco della divina carità sì e per sé fatto modo, che ogni pena e tormento, fame e sete, persecuzioni e ingiurie, scherni, strazi e villanie, ed ogni cosa portiate con vera pazienza, imparando dallo svenato e consumato Agnello, il quale con tanto fuoco d'amore corse all' obbrobriosa morte della croce. Accompagnatevi adunque con la dolcissima madre Maria, la quale, acciocchè i discepoli santi cercassero l'onore di Dio e la salute dell'anime, seguitando le vestigie del dolce figliuolo suo, consente, che i discepoli si partano dalla presenza sua, avvenga chè sommamente gli amasse, ed ella rimane come sola, ospita e peregrina. E i discepoli che l'amavano smisuratamente, anco, con allegrezza si partono, sostenendone ogni pena per onore di Dio; e vanno fra i tiranni, sostenendo le molte persecuzioni. E se voi gli dimandaste: "Perchè portate voi così allegramente, e partitevi da Maria?" risponderebbero: "Perchè abbiamo perduti noi, e siamo innamorati dell'onore di Dio e della salute dell'anime." Così voglio dunque, carissima madre e figliuola, che facciate voi. E se per infino ad ora non fuste state, voglio che siate arse nel fuoco della divina Carità, cercando sempre l'onore di Dio e la salute dell'anime. Altrimenti, stareste in grandissima pena e tribolazione, e terrestevi me. Sappiate, carissima madre, che io, miserabile figliuola, non son posta in terra per altro: a questo m'ha eletta il mio Creatore. So che sete contenta che io l'obedisca (Letter 117, II, 184-185). Noffke places this letter in late September 1377.

14. Catherine writes to Monna Melina, who was grieved by Catherine's departure from Lucca, encouraging her to learn from the apostles' example: "I wish that you learn from gentle First Truth, that He did not let tenderness for His mother, nor for any of His disciples keep Him from running, as one enamored to the shameful death of the cross, leaving Mary and His disciples. Nonetheless He loved them immeasurably but for the greater honor of God and the salvation of people, they parted from each other, because they did not attend to themselves, but refused their own consolations for the praise and glory of God, just as eaters and tasters of souls. You ought to believe that at the time that they were so troubled, they would willingly have stayed with Mary, because they loved her supremely. Nonetheless they all parted from each other, because they did not love themselves for themselves, or their neighbors for themselves, or God for themselves, but loving Him because He is worthy of love and supremely good, loving each thing and their neighbor, and themselves in God. Now I wish that you and the others may love by this way. Consider me only to give honor to God, and to give your effort to your neighbor. Because, since there might seem to you some reluctance to see parted that thing that others love, nonetheless, it is taken without weariness, if it is true love, founded only on the honor of God, and look more at the salvation of souls than yourself. Act,

act that I do not see any more pains, because this would be a medium that would not allow you to be united and to be conformed with Christ."

Voglio che impari dalla prima dolce Verità, che non lassò par tenerezza di madre, nè per veruno de' discepoli suoi che non corresse, come innamorato, all'obrobiosa morte della croce, lassando Maria e' discepoli suoi, e non di meno gli amava smisuratamente; ma per più onore di Dio e salute delle creature si partivano, perchè none attendevano a loro medesimi, ma refutavano le consolazioni proprie; per loda e gloria di Dio, si come mangiatori e gustatori dell'anime. Debbi credere che, al tempo ch'egli erano tanto tribulati, sarebbero stati volentieri con Maria, chè sommamente l'amavano, e non di meno tutti si partono, perchè non amavano loro per loro, nè il prossimo per loro, nè Dio per loro, ma amavano perchè era degno d'amore e sommamente buono: ogni cosa, e 'l prossimo e loro, amavano in Dio. Or a questo modo tu e l'altre voglio che amiate. Raguardatemi solo in dare l'onore a Dio, e dare la fadiga al prossimo vostro. Chè, perchè egli vi paia alcuna malagevolezza di vedere partita quella cosa che altri ama, non di meno ella si piglia senza tedio, se egli è vero amore, fondato solo nell'onore di Dio, e raguarda più alla salute dell'anime che a sè medesimo. Fate fate che io non vegga più pene, però che questo sarebbe uno mezzo che non vi lasserebbe unire nè conformare con Cristo (Letter 164, III, 38). Noffke sets this letter between mid-February and March 1376.

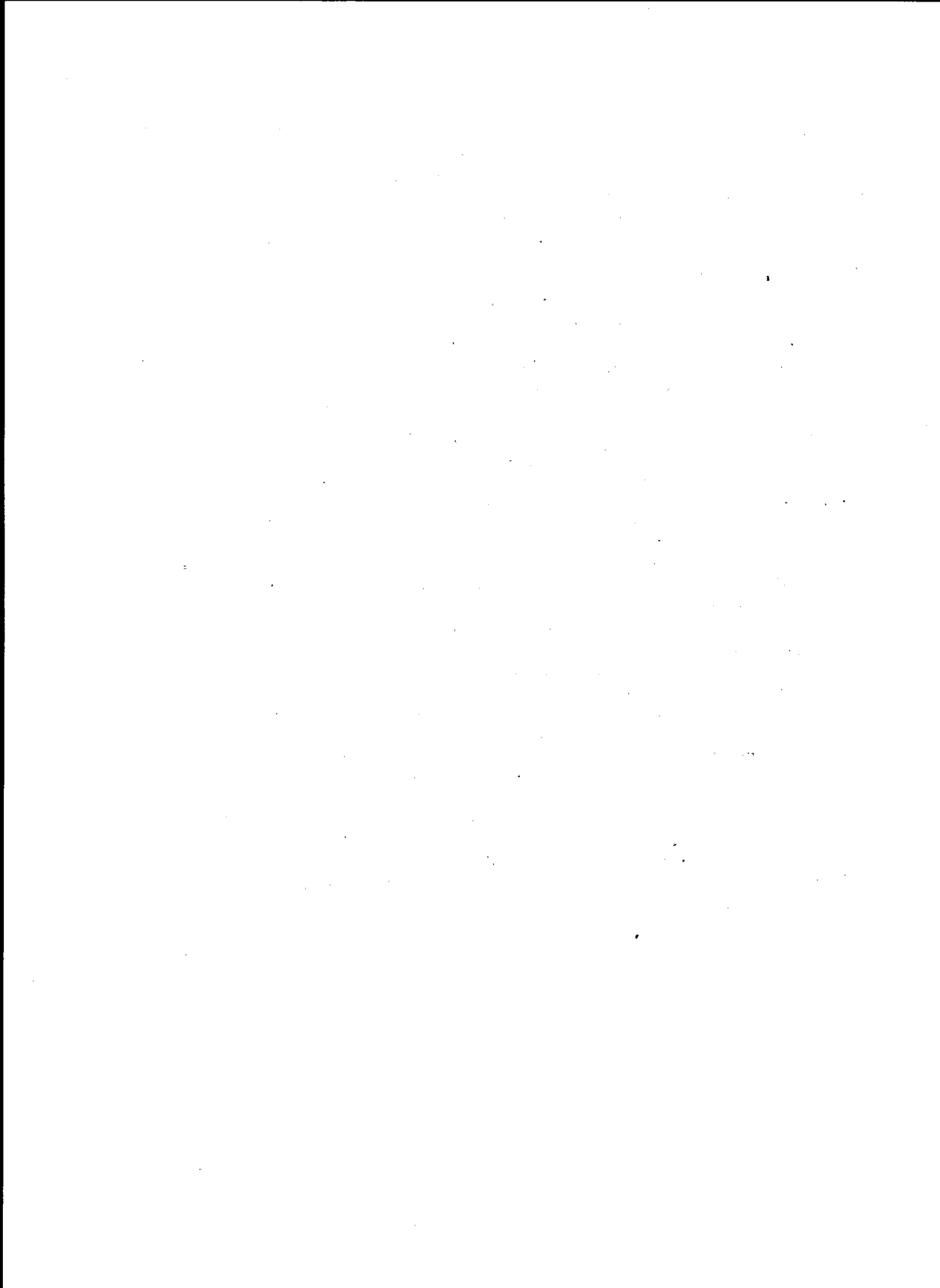
15. Catherine encourages the Abbess and nuns of the Monastery of Santa Marta in Siena to share the desires of Jesus and Mary: "It is necessary for you to act for the honor of God as did the holy Apostles. After they had received the Holy Spirit, they separated themselves, one from the other, and from that sweet mother Mary. Although it was their supreme delight to stay together, yet they abandoned their own delight. They sought the honor of God and the salvation of souls. And because Mary dismisses them from herself, they did not think, therefore, that the love was diminished, nor that they were deprived of the affection of Mary. This is the rule that is necessary to take to ourselves. I know the great consolation which my presence is to you, yet, as truly obedient, you ought not to seek your own consolation, for the honor of God and the salvation of souls."

A voi conviene fare per onore di Dio, come fecero gli Apostoli santi: poichè ebbero ricevuto lo Spirito Santo, si separarono l'uno dall'altro, e da quella dolce madre Maria. Poniamochè sommo diletto loro fusse lo stare insieme, nondimeno essi abbandonarono il diletto proprio, cercarono l'onore di Dio e la salute dell'anime. E, perchè Maria gli parta da sè, non tengono, però, che sia diminuito l'amore, nè che siamo privati dell'affetto di Maria. Questa è la regola che ci conviene pigliare a noi. Grande consolazione so che v'è la mia presenza: nondimeno, come vere obediendi, dovete voi la consolazione propria, per onore di Dio e salute dell'anime (Letter 118, II, 187). Noffke surmises that this letter was written between mid-August and early September 1377.

16. Catherine instructs Raimondo to be a good shepherd and a son of Mary: "I, Catherine, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, write to you in his precious blood with the desire to see you carry the weight of creatures through affection and desire for the honor of God and of their salvation, and to be a true pastor, who with solicitude may govern the little sheep who are yours or might be put in your hands in order that the infernal wolf might not carry them, because if you committed negligence, it would be

required of you. Now is the time to show who has hunger or not and who seems dead, whom we see lying deprived of the life of grace. Then be courageously attentive with true knowledge and with humble and continued prayers even to death. You know that this is the way to wish to know and to be the spouse of eternal truth and it is not other. And watch that you do not despise labors but with joy receive them, acting the opposite to them, with holy desire saying, 'You are most welcome' and saying 'How many graces my Creator makes me, that He makes me to bear and suffer for the glory and praise of His name.' Doing so the bitterness will be sweetness and refreshment, offering tears with sweet sighs through anxious desire, for the miserable little sheep who stay in the hands of the devil. Then the sighs will be food to you, and the tears a drink. Do not end your life in another way, delighting yourself and reposing yourself on the cross with Christ crucified. Doing so, you will be the gentle son of Mary, and spouse of eternal life. I say no more. Give your life for Christ crucified and drown yourself in the blood of Christ crucified. Eat the food of souls upon the wood of the cross with Christ crucified, submerge yourself and drown yourself in the blood of Christ crucified."

Io Catarina, serva e schiava de' servi di Gesù Cristo, scrivo a voi nel prezioso sangue suo; con desiderio di vedervi portare de' pesi delle creature per affetto e desiderio dell'onore di Dio e della salute loro; e pastore vero che con sollicitudine governiate le pecorelle che vi sono o fussero messe fra le mani, acciocchè il lupo infernale non le portasse; perocchè se ci commettesse negligenza, vi sarebbe poi richiesto. Ora è tempo da mostrare chi ha fame o no, e chi si sente de' morti, che noi vediamo giacere privati della vita della Grazia. Sollicitate dunque virilmente, e con vero cognoscimento, e con umili e continue orazioni infino alla morte. Sapete che questa è la via a volere cognoscere, ed essere sposo della verità eterna; e neuna altra ce n'è. E guardate che voi non schifiate fatiche; ma con allegrezza le ricevete: facendovegli a rincontra con santo desiderio; dicendo: "Voi siate le molto benevenute;" e dicendo: "Quanta grazia mi fa il mio Creatore, che egli mi faccia sostenere e patire per gloria e lode del nome suo!" Facendo così, l'amaritudine vi sarà dolcezza e refrigerio offerendo lagrime con dolci sospiri per ansietato desiderio, per le miserabili pecorelle che stanno nelle mani del dimonio. Allora i sospiri vi saranno cibo, e le lacrime beverage. Non terminate la vita vostra in altro; dilettrandovi e riposandovi in croce con Cristo crocifisso. Facendo così, sarete figliuolo dolce di Maria, e sposo della Verità eterna. Altro non dico. Date la vita per Cristo crocifisso, e annegatevi nel sangue di Cristo crocifisso. Mangiate il cibo dell'anime in sul legno della croce con Cristo crocifisso: affogatevi e annegatevi nel sangue di Cristo crocifisso (Letter 100, II, 118-119). Noffke places this letter between January 20 and 31, 1378.



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