

THE INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRITUAL EPISTLES  
OF  
ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

A TESIS  
PRESENTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF ARTS  
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY



BY  
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For the inspirational germ from which has evolved the original draft and final structure of this project, the thesis-writer owes his indebtedness to the late Dr. Edmund G. Gardner's thought-provoking volume, Saint Catherine of Siena: A Study in the Religion, Literature and History of the Fourteenth Century in Italy.

He is likewise indebted to Professor Vida B. Scudder, of Wellesley College, Wellesley, Mass., from whom he has had the pleasure of receiving advice and encouragement, as well as two of her own books on and about the saint of Siena.

Next, he owes sincere and grateful thanks to Professor Idilio Dell'Era, of the Seminario Arcivescovile, Siena, Italy, not only for important Catherine data and his own work on the Siennese mystic, but also for Il Regno Cristiano in Santa Caterina by Padre Angelo Puccetti, and Saggi e Studi sulla Spiritualità di S. Caterina da Siena by Rosa Berghini and several other Catherine writers.

The thesis-writer's heartfelt appreciation is due Mother Rose Imalda, O.P., Prioress of the Convent of Our Lady of Angels, Stoke-on-Trent, England, for sending him the rare 1915 edition of Mother Theodosia Drane's excellently written two-volume work, The History of St. Catherine of Siena and Her Companions, which

contains the carefully wrought historical, chronological and translational revisions of Dr. Edmund G. Gardner.

He has further to thank sincerely the Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, Florence, Italy, for locating a dozen valuable books for him, particularly Marchese Piero Miscistelli's Le Lettere di S. Caterina da Siena, M. Franceschini's Sanctae Catharinae Senensis Legenda Minor, M. - H. Laurent's Il Processo Castellano, and Eugenio Dupré Théseider's Epistolario di Santa Caterina da Siena, without which publications the thesis-writer doubts that he would have been able to make much headway in the solution of his thesis problem.

He is grateful, too, to the following libraries, which have furnished him with either pertinent books or essential information: the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City; the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.; the Library of the University of California, Los Angeles, California; the General Library of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.; the Yale University Library, New Haven, Conn.; the Siena Heights College Library, Adrian, Mich.; the St. Catherine of Siena College Library, Saint Catherine, Ky.; the New York City Public Library; and the Buffalo Public Library, the Catholic Library, and the Grosvenor Library, all of Buffalo, N. Y.

Finally, but above all, he owes his heartfelt gratitude to the Rev. Dr. R.-H. Shevenell, O.M.I., Vice-Dean of the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Arts, for personal suggestion, candid advice, and constructive criticism during the writing of this thesis.

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## CURRICULUM STUDIOIUM

The thesis-writer, who was born in Pittsburgh, Pa., on May 19, 1908, completed his undergraduate studies in the Extension Department of Canisius College, Buffalo, N. Y., in 1940, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Science. In the same year, he undertook advanced courses in the Graduate School of Canisius College, terminating them and receiving his Master-of-Arts degree in 1943. The title of his thesis was: The Christian Renaissance: The Devotio Moderna in the Italy of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries. In 1948, he entered on a program of further graduate studies in the Extension Department of Historical Studies at the University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	<b>Introduction: Catherine the Epistler</b>	9
	Catherine of Siena as a letter-writing Dominican Tertiary - Her correspondence both extensive and variegated - The thesis problem restricted to her religious epistles - The origins of the problem traced - The thought provoking work of Dr. M. G. Gardner - Essential Catherine epistolary materials - The five representative contemporaries treated - The limits of, and the two-fold approach to, the problem.	
II.	<b>Ranieri Pagliarosi: A Poet Who Becomes a Hermit</b>	23
	The "Circolo Spirituale" of Catherine - Pagliarosi the Poet enters it in 1370 - He acts as the Sienese saint's secretary - The troubled versifier seeks the maid of Siena's advice - Her first letter to him - An analysis of her other letters to the poet - Catherine exhorts him to draw out the two-edged sword of love and hate - She lifts Ranieri out of his natural tendency to sadness and discouragement - He grows from virtue to virtue - Ranieri becomes an Clivetan hermit - His verses in praise of Catherine - The post-hermit's free admission of the Sienese epistler's spiritual influence on him.	
III.	<b>Stefano Maconi: A Noble Who Slams the World</b>	43
	The Maconis are a feuding family - The saintly epistler brings peace to Stefano and his parents in 1376 - Maconi's gradual conversion to active Christianity now begins - He becomes Catherine's amanuensis - Her letters to Stefano's mother, Monna Giovanna - Catherine advises her not to interfere with her son's vocation - The virgin of Siena despatches twelve epistles to Stefano - Her definition of true happiness - She advises Stefano to cast off the fetters of bondage - He takes the Carthusian	

habit in 1291 - Maconi claims that he owes his change of life to the intercession of the Blessed Mother and St. Catherine.

IV. William Flote and the Essence of Amiability

68

Cambridge-graduated Flote goes to live in the Italian Augustinian Forest of Lecceto in 1362 - He unwittingly criticizes some of his fellow-hermits - Catherine's six letters to Flote urge him to be humble as Christ was humble - She stresses the fact that tolerance springs from true love and amiableness - Brother William progresses upon the road of spiritual sacrifices - The virgin of Siena confides to him her teaching on self-knowledge - Ser Cristofano testifies that Flote has taken all her admonitions in good part - Flote's sermon on Catherine is in part an expression of gratitude to her for her beneficial influence on him.

V. Raimondo de' Capua: A Humble Knight of Christ

85

Fra Raimondo is appointed Catherine's last confessor in 1374 - This is the age that sees Italy ruled by pleasure and guided by chance - The epistler of Siena transmits sevenhundred letters to her confessor - She exhorts him to intensify his campaign against the foes of God and Truth - She advises Capua not to let his eyes see things as impossible to do - Spurred on by Catherine, he battles valiantly for Christ's Church - She reveals her faith and trust in Capua - The maid of Siena makes Raimondo her chief literary executor - His devotion to Catherine prompts him to write the first story of her life. In this biography he attributes much of his spiritual growth to her.

VI. Tommaso Caffarini: Popularizer of Catherinianism

101

Fra Tommaso meets Catherine for the first time in 1260 - Her indebtedness to him for his biblical expositions - The Tuscan saint's letters to him on the true meaning of consecration to duty - She reminds Caffarini that he must act with unselfish interest on behalf of a just Christian cause - Her epistle on inward peace -

Caffarini's admission that Catherine has been inspired to save many erring souls - In labours for more than fifty years to have Catherine inscribed in the Catalogue of Saints - Fra Tommaso's works, the Supplementum and the Legende Abbreviate, are replete with words of praise for the Bienesse saint, whom he considers responsible for his own progress up the ladder of spiritual perfection.

Summary and Conclusion	118
Appendix A: Letter from Catherine to Bonifacio Sagliacini	123
Appendix B: Meconi's Testimonial Letter to Caffarini	125
Appendix C: Letter from Catherine to William Fiata	126
Appendix D: Blessed William the Recluse	128
Appendix E: Blessed Raimondo the Historian	130
Appendix F: Canonization Bull of Pope Pius II	132
Abstract of the Thesis	134
Bibliography	136

## CATHERINE I

### INTRODUCTION: CATHERINE AND HER SPIRIT

That Catherine of Siena was a Dominican Tertiary and a Saint of the Middle Ages is common knowledge among a large number of Catholics and non-Catholics; but that she was a voluminous epistler of the Fourteenth Century, who employed at once the services of several secretaries and messengers and who could dictate inspiring spiritual letters to three assistants simultaneously, is a fact not widely known.

St. Catherine's epistles were dispatched to individuals of every stratum of society, which represented various and diverse temperaments: to powerful statesmen and distinguished clerics; to shrewd merchants and haughty noblemen; to learned doctors of law and medicine; to bold condottieri and pious monks; to simple-minded common men and women and to hardened criminals in prison. Indeed, her letters present before our eyes a veritable panorama of the Fourteenth Century.

The Siennese Saint flourished in an age noted for its singularly opposite characters and interests. It was an age which was soon to herald the advent of the "Universal Man" as well as the neo-Pagan and Christian Humanists. Although Catherine was born of humble parentage in 1347 and died thirty-three years later, she stands out, nevertheless, as a highly distinctive personality whose only interest was to teach love of God and man and to combat relentlessly the Devil and all his infernal works.

St. Francis-like in spirit and unaffected in her writing, Catherine yet reveals a uniquely molded nature of unusual interest and a high and noble mind that is unmistakably reflected in the very religious epistles which she addressed to her contemporaries. It is these spiritual messages and the keen intellect that dictated them which have left an indelible impression upon the minds of hagiographers and scholars down through the ages.

The single aim of this thesis is, therefore, to examine into the extent of the influence of St. Catherine of Siena's spiritual epistles on her contemporaries. While very little has been written precisely on the influence of the Saint's religious letters, the writer is, nevertheless, indebted primarily to Dr. Edmund Garratt Gardner's enlightening and well documented book<sup>1</sup>, not only for directing his attention to the existence of an interesting Catherinian problem, but also for prompting him to collect materials for his thesis.

It is in the preface to his work on Catherine, that Dr. Gardner points out that the "real substance of what she [Catherine] had to say"<sup>2</sup> in many of her epistles "still remained unpublished",<sup>3</sup> chiefly because of the fact that a number of her letters had not, up to his time, been unearthed. He proceeds to confide to the reader that an appreciable amount of work is "still to be done by whose would restore the

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1 E. G. Gardner, Saint Catherine of Siena. N.Y.: Dutton, 1907.

2 Ibid., p. XIV.

3 Ibid.

true and complete correspondence of the Seraphic Virgin."<sup>4</sup>

It is, then, these observations by Gardner, together with the remark, namely, that the Siamese Saint had wielded a telling influence upon Italian social conditions of her times, which spurred the writer on to an investigation of all available data on Catherine and her letters, and subsequently prompted him to write this dissertation on the Saint's spiritual influence on her contemporaries.

Examined from the chronological standpoint, the origins of the writer's problem may be laid in the Eighteenth Century; for it was in 1713 that Girolamo Gigli<sup>5</sup> attracted new attention to, and created greater interest in, the epistles of the Siamese Virgin, after they had lain dormant for 109 years.

After Gigli had consulted Catherine's epistles in the collection preserved by Luigi De Angelis in the Biblioteca of Siena, and had studied the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century awkwardly printed epistles of the Saint circulated by Fontanesi,<sup>6</sup> the Anonymous Venetian,<sup>7</sup> Bergamo,<sup>8</sup> Torresano,<sup>9</sup> and Ferri,<sup>10</sup> he released his monumental work, L'Opere della Serafica Caterina da Siena. He devoted Volumes II and III to the Seraphic Virgin's epistles, which were accompanied by the erudite annotations of Federigo Burlamacchi.

- 4 Gardner, op. cit., p. XIV.
- 5 G. Litelli, S. Caterina da Siena. Roma: Livorno, 1945, I. IIII.
- 6 G. J. Fontanesi, Epistole di Sancta Chaterina. Bologna, 1492.
- 7 "Sogno della Speranza", Lettere di Sancta Catharina. Venezia, 1562.
- 8 B. de Bergamo, Epistole di Sancta Catherina. Venezia, 1500.
- 9 M. Torresano, Epistole et orationi de Sancta Catharina da Siena. Venezia, 1542.
- 10 D. Ferri, Lettere levatissime della vergine S. Catherina da Siena. Venezia, 1584.

Although it must be admitted that the Gigli editions of 1713 (Sienna) and 1721 (Lucca), as well as the Tommaseo edition of 1860,<sup>11</sup> were carefully prepared and printed, they do not, nevertheless, throw adequate light upon the true value and importance of Catherine's spiritual influence as she exerted it on her contemporaries. Nor did Annotator Burlamacchi make it his primary task to examine minutely and evaluate the Catherinian epistolary wave of influence; yet we owe him due credit for his exhaustive researches into Fourteenth Century Italian history.

Towards the end of the Nineteenth Century, Mother Augusta Drane published what was regarded as the best English version of the Siennese Saint's life.<sup>12</sup> Drane's aim is fully stated in these words: "The writer has aimed at giving the facts of St. Catherine's life as recorded by other biographers, restoring their chronological order, and at the same time supplementing them with additional matter drawn from original sources hitherto either partially or entirely neglected."<sup>13</sup>

Although Mother Drane was a foe of authors who tended to fill up the historic outlines of their narratives with materials which were purely imaginative, she, none the less, unwittingly committed errors of history, chronology, and rendition; for the

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11 N. Tommaseo, *Le Lettere di S. Caterina da Siena*. 4 vols. Firenze, 1860.

12 A. Drane, *The History of St. Catherine of Siena and Her Companions*. 2 vols. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1915.

13 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. ix.

1915 edition of her work, published at the behest of Drane enthusiasts, bears this flyleaf notation placed immediately before the preface: "Through the kindness of Professor Edmund Gardner, certain errors of Italian History and Chronology, and in the translation of St. Catherine's letters, have been corrected." 14

Of course, Professor Gardner is the Dr. Gardner whom the thesis-writer has already mentioned in the present Introduction. To be sure, it remained for Gardner's researches to focus attention on the fact that Catherine's epistles do shed a new light upon the troublous religious and social conditions of her era. His book lays unusual emphasis upon the Seraphic Virgin's peace-making missions and personal influence in the Italian interstate relations of her times.

However, Gardner is concerned more with Catherine's influencing personality as such than he is with her epistolary influence. Then, too, his "book is a picture of certain aspects, religious and political, of the fourteenth century in Italy." 15 In reality, the Gardner publication is a "new life of the woman [Catherine] who was the finest and most single-hearted patriot of her age." 16

In the preparation of his work, Gardner was "greatly aided by the manuscripts still preserved of Catherine's letters, manuscripts

14 Front flyleaf notation, in op. cit., Vol. 1.

15 These are Gardner's prefatory words. Op. cit., p. vii.

16 Ibid.

full of unpublished matter which has hitherto been unaccountably neglected, having apparently escaped the notice of all biographers and editors."<sup>17</sup>

Another contemporary scholar who contributed much to a better understanding and appreciation of Catherine's unistles, was Professor Vide D. Scudder, who in 1905 published her carefully prepared book, Saint Catherine of Siena as Seen in Her Letters. Her book was received so enthusiastically that she successfully put out three other editions, in 1906, 1911, and 1926.

Professor Scudder, in translating only about 70 of the 400 epistles attributed to the Sainly Epistler, originally used the Gigli text, which, though accurate, in so far as an interpretation of the Tuscan vernacular employed by the Siennese Virgin is concerned, is incomplete.

It is important to note, too, that Scudder's volume is not devoted principally to an evaluation of the influence exerted by Catherine's spiritual epistles. Rather, her work is intended as a commentary on the mind and personality of Catherine as they are reflected in her letters.

Since Gigli's time, new Catherinian epistolary materials, once omitted or suppressed, have been included by scholars such as: Fanfani,<sup>18</sup> Motzo,<sup>19</sup> Fawtier,<sup>20</sup> De Boissieu,<sup>21</sup> Fino,<sup>22</sup>

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17 E. Gardner Op. cit., p. vii.

18 A. Fanfani, Letters di S. Caterina da Siena, Torino: Libreria Salesiana, 1877.

19 E. R. Motzo, Lettere di Caterina da Siena, Cagliari, 1931.

20 R. Fawtier, Sources Hagiographiques, Paris 1921.

21 A. De Boissieu, Sainte Catherine dans ses Lettres, 1903.

22 S. Fino, Santa Caterina da Siena, Torino, 1944.

Fatini,<sup>23</sup> Oddasso,<sup>24</sup> Bitelli,<sup>25</sup> Ramazzotti,<sup>26</sup> and Misciattelli.<sup>27</sup>

The writer has found of tremendous value the Epistolario of Misciattelli, principally because the latter has included in his work the letters of Catherine's faithful disciples (Pogliaresi, Dalle Colle, Maconi, Dalle Vigne, Cafferini, and Flete), as well as a group of epistles penned or dictated by the Saint and originally unearthed by Gardner and Motzo.

For the modern student of Catherine, writes Misciattelli, the letters of the disciples are "the most precious document for an understanding of the atmosphere in which the simple-hearted Sienese Saint spent her home life, confided her secret thoughts, her feelings of happiness, sorrow, and hope."<sup>28</sup>

Equally important are the Misciattelli newly edited letters dictated or penned by Catherine; for they are vibrant with the very human feeling of the Saint, and present her as the lover and soother of souls.

Another Twentieth-Century interpreter and editor of St. Catherine's epistles, is Fr. Eugenio Dupré-Thésacider. Before starting work on

- 23 G. Fatini, La Critica Moderna e Le Lettere di Santa Caterina Da Siena. 1931.
- 24 A. C. Oddasso, Lettere di Santa Caterina da Siena a Donna dell'Aristocrazia. Roma, 1947.
- 25 G. Bitelli, Santa Caterina da Siena: Lettere Scelte. Roma, 1945.
- 26 G. Ramazzotti, Le Lettere di S. Caterina da Siena ai Professionisti ed agli Artisti. Roma, 1947.
- 27 P. Misciattelli, Epistolario: Le Lettere di S. Caterina da Siena e di Alcuni Suoi Discipoli. Six volumes. Firenze, 1940.
- 28 Ibid., Vol. VI, p. IX.

his ambitious project, Lettere di Santa Caterina da Siena (Rome, 1941), Dr. Théseider had already written some very provocative and penetrating articles on the Saint's letters to Italian statesmen.<sup>29</sup> As yet, he has not completed his proposed large-scale interpretative task. However, the first volume of his project, which is the only one he has thus far published, embodies a fund of information for the critic or medievalist Italian; for in it he presents a comparative study of the textual contents of 88 of St. Catherine's letters as edited by Gigli and Tommaseo. Among these letters examined by Théseider are a few of those addressed by Catherine to Naconi, Caffarini, Dalle Vigne, Netti, and Pagliarosi.

Among the other principal works which have been profitably utilized in the preparation of this thesis and which deserve special mention, are the following:

- 1) M.-H. Laurent, Il Processo Castellano (Milano, 1943).

This volume comprises a collection of testimonies and letters by Catherine's followers, and others who had come under her influence. Being the depositions of the witnesses who were cited to appear before Francesco Barbero, Castello Bishop of Venice, in 1411, in order to give testimony regarding the Venetian Virgin's sanctity and doctrine, they were afterwards used in the process of her canonization. Several of the more important contestations,

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<sup>29</sup> E. Dupré Théseider, La cronologia delle lettere politiche di Caterina, S. G. I, 1923, pp. 113-136. "Un codice inedito dell'epistolario di Caterina da Siena," in bulletino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano, 49, 1933. "Il problema critico delle lettere di Caterina da Siena," in bulletino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano, 49, 1933, pp. 117-278.

including those of Cafferini, Noceni, Bartolomeo de Dominicis, and Malavolti, are to be found in this book. An older publication contains the depositions of seven witnesses only, whereas Laurent's edition, which follows very closely the original manuscript preserved in the Basilica di S. Domenico in Siena, contains twenty-four.

ii) R. Franceschini, Cafferini Tommaso -- S. Caterina Senensis, Legenda Minor (Milano, 1942). Prior to 1942 Cafferini's Legenda Minor, which is an abridgment of Delle Vigne's biography of Catherine, had never been published in its entirety. Thus, for the first time, Franceschini has published an edition of Cafferini's so-called appendix which contains several additions which he discovered in an original codex preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense di Milano. Cafferini was well acquainted with the Saint many years before she became known to Delle Vigne; and the spiritual influence that she exerted on those members of her inner circle, which Delle Vigne learned from the lips of others, had often been personally observed by him. This book forms one of the volumes of that group of rare Catherinian works which has been published by the Cattedra Cateriniana of the U. Università di Siena.

iii) G. Gigli, Vita della Beata Santa di Gesù Cristo, S. Caterina da Siena (Siena, 1707). This is the Italian rendition of the original life, commonly called the Legenda, the preparation of which was entrusted to Raimondo delle Vigne da Capua, who had been

Catherine's spiritual director and intimate friend during the last and most important period of her life. The Legend was written in Latin by Rainondo, and was first translated into Italian by the Saint's secretary, Bonieri di Landoccio dei Pagliarasi. Then in 1707 Gigli, Professor of "Public Letters" in the University of Siena, undertook the publication of Catherine's life and complete works, he caused a new translation of the Legend to be made by the Canonico Bernardino Pesci. The Vita now forms the first volume of Gigli's L'Opere di Santa Caterina. This volume is replete with Rainondo's impressions of Catherine's constant devotion to, and influence on, her spiritual "family", of which she was the mother and head.

An analysis of St. Catherine's epistles discloses the fact that she addressed approximately 400 messages<sup>30</sup> to at least 65 persons and governmental and ecclesiastical bodies. Because of the extent and variety of her correspondence, it has been necessary to confine this thesis to her spiritual letters and to the treatment of the following six distinctive historical personages, who provide an adequate cross-sectional representation of the contemporaries upon whom the Saint of Siena exerted a tremendous spiritual influence:

1) Bonieri di Landoccio dei Pagliarasi (d. 1408), a disciple and a secretary of St. Catherine, an excellent poet, and author of a rhymed Saint-Legend and of beautiful lauds in praise

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<sup>30</sup> Catherine's four-hundred letters in manuscript form are to be found in the following European cities: Siena-Biblioteca Comunale (municipal) di Siena, Ms. B. III, 3. Roma-Biblioteca Casanatense, MSS. 297 and 3177; Biblioteca Vaticana, Cod. Vat. Lat. 938; Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele, Ms. 107 (Ms. S. Pent. 9). Firenze-Biblioteca Nazionale, Ms. Altini, 86-60, cl. VIII, f. 135, 170 and 180, cl. XXIV, f. 155, 187 and 190, cl. XXXVIII, Ms. 130; Biblioteca Riccardiana, Ms. 1302, 1345, 1678. London-British Museum, Harleyan, Ms. 3490.

of the virgin of Siena.

ii) Stefano di Corrado Fieschi (d. 1471), Prior-General of the Carthusian Order and heritor of Fieschi.

iii) William Piate (d. circa 1388), the English Augustinian monk who directed the activities of the Sienese Catherinists.

iv) Raimondo delle Vigne da Capua (d. 1399), Master-General of the Dominicans, St. Catherine's chief spiritual director, and author of Sanctae Matris Catherine eximia *lectura* (1396).

v) Tommaso di Antonio Bocci Caffarini (d. 1434), one of the saint's first followers and most loyal associates, who is remembered for his Legenda Minor and indefatigable labours to have the epistles of Siena canonized.

At this juncture, the writer would like to indicate more specifically the limits of, and the two-fold approach to, his problem. This project is not concerned with a re-interpretation of the mystical or ascetical theology of Catherine's age, as this would be the work of trained theologians. Nor does it pretend to re-evaluate Catherine's merits as a literary writer, for this would be the task of expert littérateurs. The problem, then, deals solely with a discussion of Catherine's spiritual epistles, which, with the grace of God, brought about a beneficial change in the lives of certain men of her times.

However, a solution of the thesis problem has required the following two-pronged appulse:

First, it has been necessary to render into English seventy-seven Tuscan and Latin epistles despatched by Catherine and her disciples. Excepting for those appended to this thesis, these epistolary renditions remain in manuscript form.

Second, the thesis-writer has been obliged to inspect the seventy-seven documents for real and reasonably acceptable elements of Catherine's religious influence.

This novel treatment, of examining and evaluating the extent of the Siennese virgin's epistolary influence on her disciples, has never before been similarly attempted.

Inasmuch as 571 years have elapsed since Catherine's death, it is not an easy matter to put one's finger upon an infallibly tangible influence. Therefore, the writer, keeping this fact continually in mind, has tried to avoid falling into the error of intolerant dogmatism.

In the chapters which follow, the word "influence" will bear a restricted meaning. Catherine's epistles will be regarded as an influence only to the extent that they act as an adjuvant agency in helping to modify the ways of living in her contemporaries.

In Chapter II of this study, which immediately follows this Introduction, it will be shown that Catherine's epistles helped teach Ranieri Pagliarosi, a promising young poet and Pontist, to

detach his eyes, mind and heart from the love of visible and finite things of the world and to direct his attention to the Realm of the Invisible and the Infinite.

Chapter III centers on Stefano Rocconi, the wealthy but lukewarm Sieneese Christian. It was St. Catherine's letters which were instrumental in changing his attitude toward Christ and His Church, and, finally, in leading him into a Carthusian monastery, where he resigned and yielded up to the high pleasure of God all love and affection for worldly things.

How the saint's spiritual messages persuaded Willion Flete, an Augustinian hermit, to shake off the yoke of pride and render himself a free and humble Christian by refusing to make himself a judge of others and by loving his brother hermits, is discussed in Chapter IV.

In Chapter V, the writer shows how the Sieneese virgin's letters helped move Raimondo da Capua, her most illustrious confessor, to a full understanding of his duties to Christ, His Church and His vicar on earth, and helped transform him into a worthy soldier of the Divine Captain of our salvation, in order that he might fearlessly combat fleshly sin and corruption.

Chapter VI revolves about Tommaso Caffarini, the Dominican friar to whom Catherine's spiritual messages so impressively pointed out the importance of fervent prayer and perfect union with God, in order to be sustained against worldly temptations, that, after her advice, he devoted his best efforts to the diffusion

of the cult and the teaching of the virgin of Siena, and even initiated the process of her beatification.

The final Chapter gives a summary of the thesis and conclusions drawn from a study of the influence of Catherine's spiritual epistles.

In Appendices A, B and C which have been added to this thesis, the writer has introduced a pertinent group of translated passages which appear in important Tuscan and Latin documents despatched by Catherine and Stefano Maccni.

In Appendices D and E have been included biographical sketches of William Flote and Rainondo da Capua, which are seldom found in conventional American or English works on Catherine or her disciples.

Appendix F is devoted to an extract taken from Pope Pius II's Bull for the Canonization of the Sienese virgin.

These selections, essential as they are for a clear understanding of the thesis as a whole, have been regarded as too lengthy for inclusion in the body of this project.

## CHAPTER II

### RANIERI PAGLIARESI: A FOOL WHO BECOMES A HERMIT

All literature centering on St. Catherine of Siena mentions the fact that the position she occupies in her own times is altogether an exceptional one. She does not belong to a religious order; yet she is neither a secular nor a recluse. She appears before us surrounded by a group of devoted followers who are attached to her by no other ties than those of personal affection. Among these disciples are individuals of every variety of age, station and character.

Active in Catherine's spiritual circle are Stefano Maconi, William Flete, Raimondo da Capua, Tommaso Caffarini, and Ranieri Pagliaresi. With all these otherworldly persons, who are the contemporaries of the worldly Boccaccio, Boccadelli, Valla, Poggio, and Sacchetti, the saint carries on a correspondence. All of them feel free to ask for her spiritual advice, and to each and every one of them she feels obliged to give counsel according to the sincere dictates of her mind and heart.

She is not formally schooled in the fundamentals of divinity; therefore, she does not think herself qualified to answer technical theological questions. However, from time to time she is brought face to face with disturbing spiritual problems which, with the assistance of Almighty God, she handles tactfully and carefully.

Among the more involved spiritual cases which come to the attention of Catherine, is that of Ranieri Pagliaresi, or just

"Neri", as he is often called. An ardent student of Dante and Petrarca and a gifted versifier who belongs to the proud group of dawning Renaissance writers, he is well equipped, educationally, to follow the Siamese mystic's unusually phrased, though beautiful, thoughts and rapid dictation, when he becomes her secretary in 1370.

The way in which Pagliaresi comes to meet Catherine and the manner in which the saint's spiritual epistles influence him, constitute, no doubt, the most interesting and exciting episodes of the poetically inclined secretary's life.

It appears that through his acquaintance with a group of University of Siena students, Fra Bartolomeo di Domenico, the saint's second confessor, forms a friendship with Pagliaresi, who has for some little time been enjoying considerable fame as a maker of verses. Neri, who belongs to one of the lesser noble families of Siena, begins to consult Fra Bartolomeo about his spiritual difficulties, which are, indeed, quite complex. The young poet has, perhaps, been disturbed about some unpleasant experiences of the past. At any rate, he is apprehensive, morose and dejected. The world disgusts him, but religion does not draw him with sufficient impetus to sever him from what he detests. Probably it is his poetic faculty which magnifies his perplexities. He seems to see everything with blurred edges. There is no question of the fact that the troubled and hyper-sensitive Neri is wont to make Fra Bartolomeo sigh.

At long last, Fra Bartolomeo persuades Fogliarosi to approach the Sienese virgin, assuring him that she will be able to explain everything to him. Being an aristocrat, Neri is careful to do the correct thing. He addresses a formal, but rather naive, letter to the mystic, in which he asks to be received in the circle of her acquaintances. He receives the following reply from the "Tiziana Spirituale":<sup>1</sup>

You ask me to adopt you as a son, and although I am but an unworthy, miserable, and wretched sinner, I have already adopted you, and have done so with affectionate love. I have also pledged myself forever, in the sight of God, to answer for you to Him for all the sins which you have committed or might commit. However, I pray you to fulfill my desire; that is, that you confess yourself with Christ Crucified, by entirely severing yourself from mundane conversation, as in no other manner could we have this conformity with the Son of God. Clothe yourself with Christ Crucified; for He is that wedding garment that will give you grace here, and, after your earthly death, will place you at the banquet of eternal life.

Thus begins the first of at least a dozen true pieces of soul messages,<sup>2</sup> which eventually make a deep and lasting impression on Neri. Of these twelve spiritual despatches, only three are found to be in English translation when the thesis-writer undertakes

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1 N. Tommaseo, Le Lettere di Santa Caterina da Siena, Letter 99.

2 P. Misciattelli lists them as follows: Letters VIII, XIII, X, VI, XCLX, CVI, CLXXVIII, LXXXVI, CXCII, CCXII, CCCVIII, CCLXXX, CCLXXXI. These messages are distributed throughout Volumes II, III, IV, and VI of Misciattelli's Biistorico.

to render the remaining nine into the English tongue.<sup>3</sup>

Now, for the first time, as a result of the twelve renditions, the complete soul picture of Neri - the neo-Latin Humanist as well as the Christian Humanist - comes into view. Neri the Poet, whose soul is still submerged in troubled waters, is told in clear terms to follow the path once trod, for instance, by St. Francis and St. Dominic. Yes, he is advised to follow the example of Christ Himself, that is, to divest himself of all worldly possessions, resign himself completely from this world and seek the next. He is virtually commended, in fine, to drown himself in the Sacred Blood of Him Who died on Mount Calvary for the sins of man.

Because of Catherine's kindly but candid advice, Neri thinks he ought to see her. He is convinced that she is no mere woman. He even suspects that she knows that he has an ailing soul. Realizing, then, that his soul is spiritual, he believes that it ought to have something spiritual like itself; and, of course, only Catherine, he keeps repeating to himself, can well give his soul the necessary nourishment. To her, therefore, he goes immediately.

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<sup>3</sup> These nine letters, penned in the Tuscan language, are set out in P. Niccolini, *op. cit.*, and are assigned the following numbers: XLII, XLVI, XLIX, CVI, CLXXVI, CCXII, CCXXVIII, CCLXX, CLXXVI.

Pagliaroni's first visit with the spiritual mother is a cordial one; but before it is over, Catherine shows him aside and asks him if he can, in the near future, act as her secretary. Inasmuch as the holy epistler has not as yet learned to read or write, she frankly, though sadly, admits her inability to manipulate the quill. The young poet, who is wont to please, evinces visible joy at the prospect of helping Catherine. To be asked a service from a friend has always been a pleasure that has relieved the melancholy sense of his own uselessness, which has for many years harassed him. But think! how much more when the request is made by the Siamese saint!

Neri is soon seen at Catherine's side writing epistles at her dictation. One morning, after he has written a series of missives for the Siamese mystic, the latter thanks him cordially for his kind assistance; whereupon the post-scribe remarks, almost self-consciously, that he is happy to assist her, provided that she can continue to make use of one who is cold and ignorant of heart.

Catherine knows instantly that these words have come from the lips of an increasingly spiritually sick man. She thus looks at him tenderly and understandingly. "I knew immediately," she says to him, "that your soul was very much troubled and that you were disposed to continual mental struggles and capricious moods. But keep constantly in mind this truth: that God created us to give us uninterrupted life hereafter."

"I recall only too well," the pensive but mournful Pagliarosi replies, "that from the time I was a mere child I have suffered from mental confusion."

"Confusion of that kind renders the soul unmeasurable to itself," sighs the patient Catherine. "It is far worse than any other manner of suffering. Cast your eyes upon the Cross. There you will find the light that liberates us from darkness, not only from the eternal pitch-like darkness of mortal sin, but also from the darkness of disordered confusion which overwhelms the soul under color of humility."

"Let I forget," she adds with characteristic gentleness, "do grant me, if you will, the strong help which I stand much in need, such as you have rendered me this day."<sup>4</sup>

Neri listens to Catherine's commanding but meaningful words with deep resignation. Because he is extremely sensitive and often trembling on the verge of religious despondence, she has to talk and write to him quite frequently, so that he may be lifted out of his natural tendency to sadness and discouragement. She it is who is able to infuse into him her own strong and high hearted hope.

One learns from Catherine's epistles, as well as from the correspondence carried on between her disciples, that the post-secretary's habitual mental trial is this: he cannot realize that

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<sup>4</sup> "Collezione Pagliarosiana" di Niccolao Guidiccioni - Codex T. III, <sup>3</sup>, in the Biblioteca Municipale in Siena. Cf. Deposition of Fra Tommaso Gafferini in "Processo di Venezia", Cod. Marcian, f. 19, col. 2-f. 20, col. 1).

the Heavenly Father has forgiven him his sins. That Neri is wont to upbraid himself as unworthy to be healed so soon as he wishes.

But the sympathetic virgin of Siena well knows the needs of Neri. She knows his burden is heavy and that his heart is very sad. Gentle speech, she reasons, will help much; for is not gentle speech often like manna from the skies? She addresses, therefore, the following affectionate yet soul stirring epistle to her perplexed spiritual son: <sup>5</sup>

Allow the problem of your soul to be solved in the hope of the Blood of the Crucified One. True self-knowledge, which you can achieve through humility, will increase light. Is not our Creator more ready to pardon than we to offend? Has he not put up with our unrighteousness, and is not sadness the worst of all our faults? It is certainly so, my dear son. Open your eyes, then, to the light of holy faith. See how much you are beloved of God, and beholding His love, do not be disturbed because you likewise see the ineptness and lukewarmness of your own heart, but let self-knowledge only augment your humility and kindle your love. The more you see how awkwardly you correspond to the magnificent graces showered on you by your Maker, the more you will humble yourself, saying, with a firm resolution, 'That which in the past I have neglected to do, I will do immediately.'

The epistle just cited, as well as the others which Catherine addresses to the well-meaning but fretful Neri, are written with an exquisite tenderness. The virgin of Siena is naturally charitable and does everything within her power to bring Neri's soul closer to God.

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5 G. Gagli, L'Epistole della Serafica Vergine S. Caterina da Siena, Letter 274.

Every spiritual epistle despatched to her disciple-secretary stresses the fact that love of God lies in making God's interests and objective the soul's own interests and objective. It is an identification of the soul's desires with the desires of God. It is making God another self. To seek the object of God's will is, in final resort and ultimate analysis, to seek God Himself, since God cannot seek but Himself.

Thus Catherine exhorts Nori to enroll his whole life's activity under the eye, and in the presence, of God; to regard his life from God's angle of vision, not from his own; and to do all things for God and because of Him.

To be sure, the saint's spiritual messages begin slowly but surely to open the windows of Fogli resii's soul. However, because he attaches too much importance to minor matters, he is often given to self-torment. His imagination plays him continual tricks, so that he sees things larger and different from what they really are. Being very sincere in his piety, he is troubled by scruples and severe doubts about himself. It seems to him that he cannot possibly be saved. Catherine has, again and again, to cheer and comfort his soul, which is "like a leaf shaken by the wind." <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> N. Tommaso, op. cit., letters 112 and 113.

For instance, in one sympathetic and consoling letter she writes the abbeled Nori as follows: <sup>7</sup>

Dearest and sweetest son in Christ sweet Jesus  
 I, Catherine, servant and slave of the servants of  
 Jesus Christ, write to you in His precious Blood,  
 so that you may never be shocked by anything that  
 may happen to you. May your mind be pacified regarding  
 all the mysteries of God, as you behold the ineffable  
 love which moved Him to draw forth from Himself  
 reasonable creatures, and to give us His image and simi-  
 tude, and to redeem us with the Blood of the immaculate and  
 spotless Lamb.

Thus seeing, you will hold all that happens to you  
 in due reverence, and in true humility you will dismiss  
 more appearances, when sometimes through the illusion  
 of the devil, things seem to you to get out of their  
 right proportions through your very mental occupations  
 and sweet physical torments. I say no more. Remain in  
 the holy and sweet grace of God. Let Christ the Redeemer  
 give you His eternal benediction. Sweet Jesus, Jesus  
 Love.

Catherine's spiritual instructions to Nori, and to her other  
 disciples, impress one with the inescapable fact that all our  
 moral conduct may be enforced by following Christ the Redeemer, as  
 exemplar, or efficient or final cause. <sup>8</sup> Imitating Christ, says she,  
 one must die to sin in baptism as He died on the Cross. One should

<sup>7</sup> P. Macciattelli, op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 193-194.

<sup>8</sup> Idid., Vol. VI, pp. 177-241. Cf. Pino, L., Lettere  
 Scelte di Santa Caterina da Siena, pp. XVII-XXXIV;  
 Borghini, E. et al., Spiritualita' Cateriniana, p. 12-13.  
 Matronola, L. (tr.), Ascolta della mistica by Stolz, R.A.,  
 Chapter II; and D'Urso, P., Caratteri generali della  
 dottrina mistica Cateriniana, p. 186.

rise from this sacrament to new heavenly conduct as Christ rose after death. We are members of Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit, and should act accordingly. As the Christian is one in Christ, continues the Siennese mystic, he must not be guilty of the repulsive act of making the members of Christ the members of an ignominious clique. We are all brothers of Christ - sons of God and longer servants of sin. We are all joint heirs with Christ. Thus, counsels the saint, if we cause ourselves to suffer with Him, we may have the joy also to be glorified with Him. By our indivination - that is, incorporation in Christ through faith and baptism -, we receive a new birth, a new creation, a new life, for it is a divine life. <sup>9</sup>

What is commendable, too, about the saint's spiritual communications to Mari, is the way in which she connects all the virtues. It is her thoroughness which makes her seldom content with the mention of a virtue or two. With her it is all or nothing. And so she rivets our attention with a concrete picture of the full armoury of virtues. <sup>10</sup> But the complete picture of the virtues, which

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9 Prof. Emilio Fiovesan, who has made an exhaustive study of "Catherine and Her Use of the Bible," observes that the Siennese saint cites the Old Testament correctly, either verbatim or in substance, 51 times; and that she makes 340 correct citations from the New Testament. Borgnini, M., et al., op. cit., pp. 79 and 81.

10 L. Ferretti, Lettere di Santa Caterina da Siena, Vergine Domenicana, Vol. 1, pp. 4, 23, 85, 95, 102, 169, 177.

she describes so well, is a picture of life. Vice is but a maiming of that life; virtue is integrity, wholeness, and holiness.

It is no surprise, then, that Catherine should exhort Neri Pagliaresi to "grow from virtue to virtue."<sup>11</sup> Growth in faith - the foundation of virtues - is most essential, she writes him. She advises him to turn his eyes away from material things, for the devil skilfully acts on the senses in the case of obsessions. He can influence the imagination, arousing fascinating but evil images that attract the sensitive appetite, which in turn gives a bias to the will; or he may confuse the mind through distorted images. The temptation may resemble the action of a convex mirror by enlarging the things of this earth; or of a concave mirror, by the reducing of things of eternity to a single seemingly insignificant point.

Often when Catherine writes of evil and temptation, peace of mind and virtue, she resorts to figurative language. Witness, for instance, the following brief but carefully worded message to her "sweet son" Neri, to whom she says that the numbing of self-will

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<sup>11</sup> The Tuscan version reads: "crescere di virtù in virtù". P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 148.

will earn for him the crown of virtue: 12

Dearest and sweetest son in Christ sweet Jesus! I, Catherine, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, write to you in His precious Blood, with desire to see you ever grow from virtue to virtue, till I behold you return to that sea of peace where you shall never have any fear of being estranged from God. For the foul perverse law that militates against the Spirit shall be left on earth, and shall have rendered its due thereto. It is my earnest wish, my sweet son, that while you live in this life, you exert yourself to live dead to all self-will. It is in such death that you shall win virtue. Thus living, you shall resign to earth the law of perverse desire.

It becomes increasingly clear that Catherine uses every spiritual formula to recast the rather fragile and tormented frame of Neri. Determined to make him spiritually perfect, she thus proceeds to dwell, for his own sake, upon the virtue of charity. The saint points out to Pagliaresi that charity is the greatest of virtues. She cites these three reasons:

First, charity is the form or master-principle of all the virtues. It inspires the greatest thing on earth - sanctity. For the essence of sanctity is heroic charity, manifesting itself in generous enterprises for God; implying great faith and hope as well as great cardinal virtues, prudence, temperance, justice, and a fortitude or force of soul; conquering all material dangers,

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12 F. Misciottelli, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 148.

despising earthly things in comparison with heavenly.

Secondly, charity rests most completely in God, the last end, continues the saintly Siennese. It best fulfils in this way the purpose of human existence. Faith, indeed, believes in God, but it does not rest in Him. Hope looks forward to God to be enjoyed in the future. But charity already possesses God, as present in apprehension and reality. It rests in God for the sake of God; it has found a mood where anxiety ceases.

And, finally, says Catherine, charity is greatest because it is eternal. It has immortality like that given to Adam's body. It has the possibility of avoiding death, though it is not imperishable like the human soul. She lays great stress upon the fact that neither hunger nor thirst, neither nakedness nor homelessness, neither sword nor pestilence, neither life nor death, can separate us from the charity of Christ. The Old Testament anticipated this by saying that many waters cannot quench love, and that it is strong as death and as hard as Sheol.

Pointing out to Pagliarese that love will not dwell upon the chord of self, Catherine goes on to extol charity and to rebuke those given to selfishness, which she properly describes as a perverted instinct of self-preservation, or self-glorification resulting in envy of our neighbor. A greater altruism and less interest in self, she counsels Mari, is the remedy for selfishness.

In order, then, to counteract selfishness, one must have a greater love of God and of other men — one must practise charity.

Love of our Creator and our fellowmen is the dominant note in the religion of Christ, who came upon earth that man might have a larger life. Catherine, servant and slave of the servants of the Holy Exemplar of Nazareth, succeeds, with the assistance of Divine Grace, to provide a larger life for Pagliarresi. In the message which is cited below, she furnishes him with an effective antidote for the false values of a pleasure-sick world. This spiritual letter bears a special significance because it epitomizes all of the saint's advice to Neri, the once morose and sensitive poet of Siena, who joins her "circolo spirituale", acts as her secretary, and finally becomes a hermit at Agromaggio near Florence.



Pagliaresi takes to heart these and other epistolical words despatched to him by the saint. His will finally succumbs to the will of Catherine. But is there any evidence to support this contention? Indeed, there is. Neri's own testimony and the testimonies of his friends, some of whom become ardent "Caterinati", speak eloquently and convincingly.

Of unusual interest, for instance, is the attestation of Don Francesco di Vanni Malavolti, whom Catherine meets through Neri and whom she almost instantly converts at their first meeting. <sup>14</sup> Malavolti testifies in this wise regarding Neri's "change in mind and manner": <sup>15</sup>

Among the companions whom I loved the best, there was one noble youth of Siena, named Neri Landoccio dei Pagliaresi, with whom I spent the greater part of my time, both because he was pleasant and refined, and also because he was a composer of most beautiful verses, in which kind of thing I then greatly delighted. After we had been friendly for some time, Neri having heard of the glorious virgin Catherine, went to see her without my knowing it, and so had become changed in mind and manner, and, as it were, had turned out to be a new man.

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14 Dr. E. G. Gardner relates that Catherine, appearing to Malavolti in a vision eight years after her death, rebuked him for still "clinging to the vanities of the world", and "bade him rise, seek out Neri di Landoccio, and go with him to the convent of Montoliveto Maggiore, where he would be received without opposition." Malavolti followed Catherine's instructions and was received into the Olivetan Order in 1388. Saint Catherine of Siena: A Study in the Religion, Literature and History of the Fourteenth Century in Italy, p. 394

15 "Contestatio Francisci de Malvoltis" in M.-H. Laurent's Il Processo Castellano, pp. 377-378. Cf. Lugano, P., "S. Caterina e i monaci di Montoliveto," in Rivista Storica Benedettina, Tom. VII, pp. 168-173. Also Fautier, R., S. Catherine de Sienne, Tom. II, pp. 13 and 373.

Another worthwhile piece of testimony is in the form of a letter written to a Padre Jacomo by Fra Luca di Benvenuto da Monistero, in which this Olivetan monk extols the virtues of Neri and mourns his death. Fra Luca's eulogistic words run thus: 16

Dearest Father in Christ: With grief and sorrow I write to tell you of the death of Fra Neri, our comfort, help and counsel; our support, refreshment and guide; our master, receiver and preparer; our waiter and visitor; yes, he who thought for us - our delight, our only good, and our entertainer. His meekness, his holy life, his holy conversation, his holy teachings, all his holy works, his holy sayings, and his holy investigations - these are all departed from us. Alas, miserable ones! alas, poor wretches! alas, orphans! where shall we go, to whom shall we now have recourse?

Of course, it is Pagliarosi's own testimony which carries the greatest weight. He openly admits Catherine's influence on him and on his co-disciples, in these meaningful words: 17

While in her company, we felt ourselves close to the source of life. She was happy, although her suffering was bitter. She was calm, in spite of the fact that the conflict without and within was fierce. Being near Catherine, we understood how in God all the sorrow and yearning of the universe exists forever, while yet God is completeness and joy.

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16 P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. VI, pp. 134-136.

17 "Collezione Pagliarosiana" di Nicolao Guidiccioni - Codex T. III, 3, in the Biblioteca Municipale in Siena. Cf. Lazzareschi, E., S. Caterina e i Lucchesi, pp. 34-42.

Indeed, Neri's devotion to Catherine is so constant, that in his hermit's cell he writes graceful poetic lines in praise of her and also composes a rhymed saint-legend, namely, Un capitolo in rima fatto per Raynerio de Pagliaresi da Siena, discipulo di Santa Catherina and Laude ad honore de la serafica Santa Catherina da Siena, composta per Raynerio sopradetto.<sup>18</sup> In these two poems, Pagliaresi embalms the holy memory of his "mamma spirituale" and gives vent to all the feelings of affection and veneration in his grateful and loving heart.<sup>19</sup>

Long before his entrance into the Olivetan hermitage, especially on those occasions when he is obliged to be away from Siena on Catherine missions, he finds time to communicate his spiritual difficulties to the saint, who quickly despatches her humble but sincere advice to him.

Of course, there can be no doubt of the fact that the principal aim of Catherine's epistles is to influence Neri. There can be no question, too, of the fact that she so imbues

18 J. Jorgensen, St. Catherine of Siena, p. 415. Cf. Capocciaturo, A., Storia di S. Caterina da Siena e del papato del suo tempo, pp. 541-542. Also, Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke, Leipzig, 1934, Tom. VI, p. 285.

19 R. Fawtier, op. cit., Tom. II, p. 39.

what she writes with her own personality that it has sufficient power to sway him to her own way of spiritual thinking.

Yet, it would be sheer folly to assume that she and she alone is instrumental in strengthening Neri's faith in God and in His only Begotten Son. Catherine, as his spiritual mother, acts much like a boy's own mother, who, clasping his hand, leads him every Sunday to church, thereby helping him to become a good Christian. To be sure, it is the Father of Lights, the Author of the spiritual life, Who reveals to Pagliaresi the path of sanctity. Inspired, then, by the Light of the Holy Spirit and guided by the hand of Catherine, Pagliaresi leaves the goods of this world and, successfully running after those of Heaven, attains to the purity of faith and spiritual happiness.

To sum up, it has been seen in the course of this chapter that Neri Pagliaresi, a despondent young poet, becomes a member of the Siennese school for the spiritualization of man. Its foundress and head is Catherine of Siena. It has been shown that Neri, while a disciple of the saint, receives many of her spiritually imbued epistles, from which he learns that "sacrifice alone leads to a land of life."<sup>20</sup> He discovers, too, that this

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<sup>20</sup> "Collezione Pagliaresiana" di Niccolò Guidiccioni - Codex T. III, 3, in the Biblioteca Municipale in Siena.

"land of life" is eternal life, which can be won only by loving God and despising the devil. Love of God-the-Son and love of the world are two affections which cannot dwell together in the same bosom. Thus, Catherine's religious messages point out to him that the only way to dispossess the heart of its affection for the world, is by the expulsive power of a greater and stronger affection for Christ Crucified.

It is Catherine's command that Neri take the final step in the direction of supreme spiritual happiness. This step he takes when he becomes an Olivetan hermit. While it is true that the Sienese epistler paves the way for Neri's entrance into the Olivetan hermitage, it is equally true that he wills to accept the offer and invitation of God. Nor must one overlook the direct influence of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity - the Imparter of divine life. By the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Blessed Neri Pagliarese, he becomes a regenerated man - a recipient of supernatural life, a partaker of the divine life.

Having accepted the invitation and the grace of the Heavenly Father, Neri proceeds to spread the knowledge of the importance of the love of God among his friends, several of whom join the number of Catherine's disciples, namely, Francesco Malavolti, whose singular case has already been discussed, however briefly; Gabriele Piccolomini; Cristoforo di Gano; and, according to one account, Stefano Maconi.

Catherine's spiritual epistles despatched to Maconi, who becomes one of Neri's closest friends and one of the saint's most able secretaries, will be examined at length in Chapter III.

### CHAPTER III

#### STEFANO MACONI: A NOBLE WHO SEES THE WORLD

It is the letters addressed by the Virgin of Siena to Stefano Maconi, as well as those dispatched by the latter to his bosom friend, Neri Pagliaresi, which reveal the true distinguishing traits of Stefano the layman and Stefano the monk.

Misciattelli's recently compiled Epistolario contains twelve epistles directed to Stefano by Catherine and sixteen written by Stefano to Neri. Of this group of twenty-eight epistles, which appear in the original Fourteenth Century Tuscan vernacular, only a few have been translated into English. Although the thesis-writer is interested solely in determining what rôle Catherine's spiritual epistles played in converting Maconi from a carefree and jocose nobleman into a serious and pious Carthusian, he has, nevertheless, felt it necessary to peruse not only the Saint's messages to Maconi, but also those of the latter to Pagliaresi, in order to reconstruct in his (the writer's) mind the complete portrait of Stefano, and to learn something of Stefano's religious convictions before he met Catherine.

This two-fold task, namely, of rendering into English the hitherto untranslated Tuscan epistles dispatched by both Catherine and Maconi, and the decrying therein of the spiritual influences which moved the mind, heart and soul of Maconi to shun the world and seek eternal peace in a monastery, has never before been similarly attempted.

Stefano, who was the son of Messer Corrado and Madonna Giovanna Bandinelli Maconi - persons of noble rank -, had never dreamed of entering the cloistered life. But, in 1374, when he was twenty-seven years of age, he was forced into a feud with the distinguished Tolomei and Finaidini families of Siena. Having spoken to Neri Paçliaresi about this unfortunate situation, he was persuaded by the latter and his (Stefano's) own mother to make peace at any price. They even advised him to call on Catherine and place himself completely in her capable hands.

Although divided between disdain and embarrassment, he, nevertheless, made his way to the home of the Siennese saint. This happened in 1376.

In his deposition, Maconi freely admits that he had expected to be met with the prim and vinagary sweetness of the traditional old maid. Instead, says he, she received me "with the most loving charity, as though welcoming a brother on his return from distant regions." <sup>1</sup>

He continues: <sup>2</sup>

At this I was amazed, and listened to her efficacious and holy words by which she compelled, rather than induced me, to go to confession and to live virtuously. I said: 'The finger of God is here.' And when she had heard the cause of my visit, she answered confidently: 'Go, dearest son, and trust in the Lord, for I will gladly labor until you have an excellent peace; and do you suffer me to take the whole weight of this business upon my head.' And thanks to her efforts, we did indeed obtain peace in a manner truly miraculous.

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1 M. H. Laurent, *Il Processo Castellano*, p. 259. The deposition signed by Maconi bears the counter-signature of Notary Francesco de Viviano and the date, January 5, 1413. Maconi had actually completed his written testimony on June 10, 1413; but on January 5, 1413, Signor de Viviano drew up a digest of the verbal contestational process and instructed all witnesses present, among whom was Maconi, to sign the instrument.

2 *Ibid.*

The Maconis' reconciliation with their enemies, as well as Catherine's spiritual epistles to Stefano, brought about his complete conversion. Certain facts he does not, however, mention. Through delicacy, no doubt, Stefano does not, in the course of his deposition, outline in detail how the reconciliation in question was effected. It was left for his biographer, Fra Bartolomeo di Siena, to relate the particulars of this dramatic story in faultless Latin.

Fra Bartolomeo tells us that when St. Catherine had arranged the day for all the parties to meet at the Church of San Cristoforo in the Piazza Tolomei, and Corrado, Stefano's father, and Stefano himself with their kinsmen came in compliance with the Sienese Saint's wishes, the Tolomei and the Rinaldini families, with a view of adding a fresh insult and rendering reconciliation impossible, did not appear. Catherine was informed of it. "They will not listen to me," she said, "but willing or unwilling they shall be obliged to listen to Almighty God."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Bartolomeo di Siena, De Vita et Moribus beati Stephani Maconi, Lib. I, cap. 4-6.

Maconi's Italian biographer continues as follows:<sup>4</sup>

She thus went immediately to the Church whither she had convoked Stefano Maconi with his father Corrado and his other relatives. She placed herself before the principal altar, and offered frequent prayers to Heaven. Whilst she was praying, ravished in ecstasy, those who refused to be reconciled, came to the Church, unknown to one another. God brought them there. As soon as they saw Catherine in prayer and perceived, as they afterwards admitted, the rays of divine light that darted from her countenance, they felt themselves vanquished and ready to renounce their anger. They addressed themselves to Catherine, who had returned to her ordinary state. They charged her to regulate the conditions, and all soon embraced each other and mutually asked pardon.

It was at this time, when Catherine was busy making plans to bring peace between the two warring families, that she chanced to see Stefano and asked him, as she had once asked his friend Neri, to help her by writing some messages from her dictation; for, says Fra Bartolomeo, "this holy virgin, being engaged in many affairs regarding the salvation of souls, in which, by reason of her sex, she could not always personally appear, was obliged to have recourse to letters, and sometimes dictated to two or three secretaries at one and the same time, and on different subjects."<sup>5</sup>

Stefano gladly accepted the position of amanuensis, for three reasons:

First, he wished to show his appreciation of what Catherine

4 Bartolomeo di Siena, Loc. Cit.

5 Ibid.

had done to restore friendly relations between his family and the houses of the Tolomei and the Rinaldini, by giving his gratuitous services.

Second, he thought it a great honor to take dictation from the lips of an unusually talented and holy person.

Third, he was eager to learn more about otherworldly things from one who seemed to him to have been inspired from above.

As secretary to, and disciple of, Catherine, Stefano wrote epistles for her and also received several from her. It was these latter messages which eventually worked a profound ameliorative change in his heart and soul.

What Catherine says epistolically in order to bring about this change in Stefano, who had been "carried away in the current of a worldly life,"<sup>6</sup> is, for the first time, more clearly revealed in the course of this thesis.

Among the letters which the epistler of Siena addressed to Maconi and which, so far as the writer has been able to ascertain, have never before been rendered into English, are to be found her first and last of a series despatched to him.<sup>7</sup>

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6 M. H. Laurent, Il Processo Castellano, p. 258.

7 Copies of the original epistles have been published by P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 157-160, 281-282; Vol. IV, pp. 252-254; Vol. V, pp. 71-72, 82-85, 252-257, 266-270. These sources have been freely utilized by the thesis-writer.

It is evident from a perusal of these letters, which Catherine sends Stefano from Pisa, Florence and elsewhere, that he is desirous of walking in the Light of Faith;<sup>8</sup> whereupon she makes haste to lay down a two-fold discipline for him to follow, namely, the mortification of his unruly appetites and self-will. This is achieved, says she, through prayer, which softens the heart and compensates, because of its sweetness, for the bitterness that is inseparable from mortification.<sup>9</sup>

But Stefano does not appear, as yet, prepared to be burdened with severe disciplines. It is obvious that he is lacking in perseverance and fortitude, for he appeals to Catherine for comforting words and further spiritual advice. She readily knows that his uneasiness and weakness stem from two disturbing but significant causes.

The first cause, though a comparatively minor one, revolves about the fact that Stefano had attended a secret meeting against his government. Catherine, gaining knowledge of his participation in this subversive movement, causes him to inflict upon himself a severe penance for his misconduct. Meanwhile, had Stefano become

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8 P. Misciattelli, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 157-159. Cf. Maconi's letter to Pagliaresi, in which he solicits his prayers in order that "God in His goodness may deliver me from the miserable bondage of the world, and show me in what way I may best serve Him" ("pregni Dio per me che per certe n'io' bisogno, pregandolo singularmente che mi conceda grazia ch'io mi sappi sviluppare da questo fracidume del mondo; per modo ch'io sempre facci la sua volonta' per quel verso che Piu' sia piacevole a Lui"). *Ibid.*, p. 71.

9 *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 157-159.

terribly conscience-stricken? Had he begun to fear retaliatory action from the government? Had the self-inflicted penance become too great a task for the reparation of his sins?

Anyone of these factors, or probably the three combined, might have contributed to his feeling of anxiety and despair.

The second cause, which bears a greater telltale argument, is laid at the doorsteps of his own home. It is in his own home, as it will soon be pointed out, that Catherine espies those deleterious influences which attempt to keep Stefano outside the will of Heaven and stop him in the path of perfection.

To break or not to break away from the worldly comforts of home? This is the question which continually menaces the mind of Maconi. This is the problem which Catherine helps her disciple solve. It is in her epistles, which studied as they appear in the frankness and clearness of their original phraseology, that one finds the key to an intelligent understanding of what goes on between Stefano and his parents, as well as what is discussed between Stefano and the maid of Siena.

There is no denying the fact that Stefano is very much attached to his own mother, Monna Giovanna, who, in turn, loves him dearly and worries and complains whenever he is absent from home and busy working on some project assigned him by Catherine. The saintly epistler's greatest desire, on the other hand, is to see Stefano break himself loose from all secular interests

and steep himself in the Blood of Christ Crucified. 10

It is in the same kindly yet firm manner that Catherine writes Monna Giovanna, who, although she has developed a little motherly jealousy, is, nevertheless, on intimate and affectionate terms with the Saint.

As we see in Catherine's admonitions which follow, she tactfully but sincerely advises Maconi's mother not to let her exaggerated maternal tenderness hinder her son in his high and noble vocation: 11

My dear mother in Christ Sweet Jesus: I, Catherine, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, write you in His precious Blood, with the desire of seeing you a resident in the house of self-knowledge, 12 in order that you may experience true love; for, as I see it, she who does not love her Creator completely cannot be pleasing to His eyes, since He Himself is Love, and desires nothing but Love.

The Sienese epistler points out to Giovanna that love of the Heavenly Father becomes imperfect when a mother begins to shed tears because she is obliged to give up her son to the service of Him from whom man receives his inheritance.

10 Catherine sighs expectingly: "O quanto sarà beata l'anima mia, quando ti vedrò aver tagliato da te il mondo attualmente e mentalmente" (Oh, how blessed shall be my soul, when I shall see that thou hast cut thyself off from the world, actually and mentally.") P. Misciattelli, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 82-84.

11 P. Misciattelli, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 33-36.

12 Cf. Catherine's "cell of self-knowledge", which was a secret, Holy-Spirit-inspired cell in her mind, out of which she resolved never to go by reason of any external occupation. It proved to be a refuge which the Saint continually urged upon her disciples that they, too, should find, and which could never be taken from them.

She then continues: <sup>13</sup>

It is my wish that you eliminate in your person all self-love according to nature and the senses, which you feel for yourself, your children, and any other created thing. You should love neither yourself nor anything else apart from your Maker, because it is impossible that a man can serve two masters; for, if he serve the one, he is unable to give satisfaction to the other. Thus it follows that no one can serve both God and the world, because they have no harmony with each other.

It is my wish, therefore, that you lift your desire and heart above the world and all its doings, and that you open the eye of your mind in an effort to know what love God bears to you and what he has given you, for love, namely, the Word, His Only-Begotten Son-He Who in burning love has given life and has sacrificed His Body that He might cleanse mankind with His precious Blood.

Be these words, my dear mother, a source of comfort to you, and be not disturbed that I have kept Stefano so long; for I have only taken good care of him. Rest assured that I wish to do whatever I can for him and for you, even to death. You, mother, bore him once; and I wish to bear him and you and all your family, in tears and sweats, by repeated prayers and desire for your spiritual health.

For some time Stefano, although protesting his love for Christ, the Saviour of mankind, and his strong spiritual attachment to the Saint of Siena and her "figli spirituali," appears, nevertheless, a weakling to her tear-filled yet observing eyes and God-loving heart. She proceeds, therefore, to teach her undecided "son" the definition of true happiness. <sup>14</sup> She tells him forthright that happiness does not consist in honors, nor in glory, nor in wealth, nor in worldly power, nor

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<sup>13</sup> P. Miscattelli, op. cit. Vol. IV, pp. 55-58.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 92-95, 256-258.

in goods of the body. Nor is human happiness seated in the senses. Nor does man's ultimate happiness consist solely in acts of the moral virtues, nor solely in the act of prudence. To be sure, man's ultimate happiness consists in bathing himself in the Blood of Christ and in contemplating God the Father. And this two-fold operation requires that the body should be disencumbered, and to this effect are directed the unadulterated efforts of mind and will. Moreover, this operation requires freedom, she continues with emphasis, from the disturbance caused by the passions, which is achieved by means of the moral virtues and of prudence; and freedom from external disturbance, to which the whole governance of the civil life is directed.

It is unusually interesting to examine, at this juncture, one of Catherine's last letters to Maconi, in which she gently upbraids him for his irresoluteness and indecisiveness. Thus

follows the Siennese Saint's incisive and picturesque epistolitic language: 15

My dear Son in Christ Sweet Jesus: I, Catherine, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, write thee in the Sacred Blood of the Lamb, with desire to see thee sever thy bonds, and not merely set thyself to releasing them, because it requires some time to release, and this thou art not sure of effecting, so quickly does time pass from thee. For better is it, therefore, to sever them completely with a true and holy zeal. It will, indeed, be a great joy to my soul the day I see thee cut thyself off from the world both in deed and thought, and from thy own corporeal instincts, and united to the eternal life - a union which is so joyous, sweet and pleasing that it mitigates all bitterness and renders light every burdensome load! The, then, shall keep us from wielding the sword of hate and love, and severing self from self with the hand of free will? No sooner has this sword severed, than it proves of such virtue that union results.

Catherine never stops exhorting Stefano to divorce himself completely from all diabolically tainted mundane things.<sup>16</sup> Persevere upon the road of the Crucified One and remain fixed in the cell of self-knowledge, she advises him; for, every perfection and every virtue is achieved thereby. However, she reminds him always to utilize the twin-edged sword of love and hatred. Love, she says, implies hatred. Does not the lover of truth hate a lie? Does not the lover of the orphan hate its oppressor? Does not the lover of Christ hate His condemners?

Indeed, the zeal for God and for men inevitably leads to a white heat of indignation against impiety and oppression. Such indignation is rendered into action. Charity implies hate of those who impede charity; and charity, Catherine emphatically points out to Maconi, means forgiveness of one's mockers, of one's detractors, of one's enemies.

15 P. Misciattelli, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 81-83.

16 *Ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 252-257.

The "Mamma Spirituale" is forever directing Stefano's eyes to the face of Christ, counselling him to let the conduct of our Lord inspire him to be a consistent Christian and Caterinato. Be ever faithful to conscience, to principle, and to duty, she warns him. To do so is indicative of the Christian manhood which distinguishes the hero from the coward, the martyr from the apostate, the follower of Christ Crucified from the obsequious slave of human respect.

Catherine reprovingly tells Maconi to be a manly man and to cast off the fetters of bondage. She advises him not to be the slave of the rule of action supplied by the world. Correctly defining human respect, she proceeds to say that it is a vice diametrically opposed to the virtue of Christian manhood. It is a base condescension, by which a man, either from the dread of offending others, or from the hope of conciliating their friendship and good will, speaks or acts against his own intimate convictions.

The slave of human respect, says the Saint of Siena, is like the idol mentioned by the Psalmist. He has eyes and sees not; he has ears and hears not; he has a mouth and speaks not. Or, rather, he sees through others' eyes; he hears through others' ears; he is the mouthpiece of others; he is a mere puppet echoing their sentiments. He tries to please men, which is right, but at the expense of his conscience, which is wrong.

Catherine further tells Maconi that the fear of popular prejudice, especially when a religious vocation is concerned, is the most criminal form of moral cowardice, because it is placing the vacillating and ungrateful creature above the Creator.

She thus asks Stefano to reflect upon the fact that the person who acts up to his conscience has but one master, and that Master is God, Whom to serve is the greatest of honors. He enjoys the glorious liberty of the sons of God; but the slave of human opinion has as many masters as there are individuals whose censure he dreads, or whose smiles he secures at the expense of duty; and he is continually obliged to study their humor and disposition, that he may adapt his obsequious servility to their ever-changing caprice.

Catherine strongly reminds Maconi that the slave of human respect is universally detested or despised. He is odious in the sight of God, since he stifles the heavenly voice of conscience from a servile fear of men. We cannot, continues she, serve at the same time the cause of righteousness and of self-interest. The slave of human respect is despicable in the sight of his fellow-beings, for how can they respect a man who has not the manliness to speak and live up to his honest convictions? And must he not be contemptible in his own eyes when he looks

into his heart and contemplates his dissimulation and cowardice laid bare before him?

The Siennese Saint is well aware of Stefano's great desire to accept the spiritual burdens which Christ Crucified and his "Mamma Sprirituale" would place upon his shoulders; but tempting terrene and extra-terrene influences appear to dissuade him somewhat from actually giving himself up to the Divine Will of God; for which reason the patient Catherine dispatches to Stefano a very frank yet spiritually elevating epistle, the most essential portion of which is cited below: <sup>17</sup>

My dear son in Christ Sweet Jesus: I, Catherine, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, write thee in his most precious Blood, with desire to see thee risen above all childish things, and become a real man; risen, I say, from drinking the milk of consolation, mental and actual, and set to eat the hard mastly bread of many tribulations in mind and body, of struggles with Satan and insults from fair-weather friends, and of any other nature that God might be pleased to offer thee.

I wish to see thee rejoicing in such, and hastening to meet them with wholehearted desire and open gratitude to the Diving Goodness, when it may please Him to show thee such noble gifts - which will be whenever He shall see thee fit to receive them.

Rekindle, my son, thy lukewarm heart. Immerse it in Christ's Blood, that it may burn in the furnace of divine charity and become inflamed with true manful zeal, ready to enter on the battlefield to do great works for Christ Crucified.

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<sup>17</sup> P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 59.

Catherine's epistles now begin to bring out certain favorable signs in the mind and heart of Stefano; whereupon the Saint, who is rapidly nearing the day of her death, begins to impress more strongly upon him the necessity of entering the monastery, in order that he may the greater despise himself and be perfectly dead to his own will. This state of self-denial and self-effacement, she tells him, brings one closer to the state of perfection in love.

She waits patiently for a definite affirmative reply from Stefano anent the monastic life. None arrives. So our Saint is prompted to write him a very frank epistle, which will leave him free to choose between "parental and mundane bondage" and "undivided service to God." This runs Catherine's freedom of choice missive: 18

It is not my desire to force thee to come and join Christ's laborers in the vineyard. I should, indeed, have been very glad if thou hadst come, and that thou shouldst come now, if thou canst without offence. However, if it offends and distresses thy parents, no, as long as the offence is not necessary. In fact, I should have thee at this time avoid it, whenever thou canst. I am sure that, if the Divine Goodness sees it to be best, the offence will cease, so that thou canst come with peace. Come if thou canst.

This epistle must have made a deep impression on Stefano;

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18 P. Nicciattelli, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 256.

for, judging from a letter written by Catherine to Stefano and reproduced by G. Gigli, and another despatched by Stef to Neri Fagliaresi and published by P. Misciattelli, the Heavenly Father has now begun to call on Maconi to surrender to Him the "city of your soul", "adorned with fine and solid virtues." 19

It appears from the letter published by Gigli that without a word to Catherine or to anyone else, Stefano has hinted to the Abbot of Mount Oliveto,<sup>20</sup> near Siena, that he wishes to join his Community.

It is well to examine Catherine's communication to Maconi, in which she expresses both surprise and happiness at what seems good news to her: 21

A letter from the Abbot of Mount Oliveto has just reached me. In it he tells me of the plants he has planted in his garden and mine. He is hopeful of planting some others, among whom he reckons on you - that is, you and your companions. He further says that you have already engaged yourselves! Of course, it is a great happiness to me to see you coming out of your state of imperfection and embracing a perfect state. But I must confess that I am very much surprised that you should have engaged yourself without speaking a word of it to us here. There is something in all this that I am unable to comprehend; but I pray God that He guide you, so that you may do whatever is best for His honor and your own salvation.

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19 P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 57.

20 Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 53. P. Misciattelli believes that the Abbot's letter was sent to Catherine in 1378, two years before her death.

21 G. Gigli, L'epistole della Beata Vergine S. Caterina da Siena, Letter 263.

As you know, I have never wished or desired anything else since I first knew you, than that you should be delivered from the evils of the world. I have the same wish still, and I hope, please God, to keep it to the end. If you think the Holy Spirit calls you to this state, you have done well not to resist, and I shall be content. When He calls, we must answer. I should have many things to say, but I cannot and will not say them at this time.

Although Maconi has been thinking in terms of a very holy life, he has not expressed a definite desire to the Abbot of becoming an Olivetan monk. The overconfident Abbot has arrived at conclusions too quickly, interpreting, of course, Stefano's intentions by his own hopes; and because of this misunderstanding, Catherine is disappointed and Maconi is embarrassed.

However, in 1379, the very year before Catherine leaves this earth to take her place among God's Saints in Heaven, Stefano confides to his close friend, Neri Pagliarosi, that he needs his prayers; for he is determined to break himself loose from the bonds that hold him fast to the world. Thus runs one of the supplicatory passages in Maconi's letter: <sup>22</sup>

I ask you, my kind brother, not to forget me, but to pray for me who certainly need your prayers, that God in His goodness may deliver me from the miserable bondage of the world, and show in what way I may best serve Him. And there are two things by which you can show that you do not forget me: one is, that you very often recommend me to our dear and venerable Mother; and be so good as to do that at once, before this letter goes out of your hands, so that you may not forget it. The other is, that you write to me very, very often - a thing that I entreat as earnestly as I can, especially about what you promised, and also when you have any good news about the Church. I am sure that you would do so if you knew what a great charity it is.

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22 P. Mischiattelli, op. cit., Vol. VI, n. 71.

Stefano Maconi is finally delivered from "the miserable bondage of the world" in 1381, in which year he takes the Carthusian habit in the Certosa di S. Pietro di Pontignano outside Siena. <sup>23</sup> This he does at the command of Catherine, according to the testimony of his fellow-disciple, Ser Barduccio di Piero Canigiani. <sup>24</sup>

Maconi's rise in the Carthusian Order is very rapid. <sup>25</sup> He has scarcely entered the order when he is named Prior of his Certosa. In 1389, he is called as Prior to the new and splendid Certosa built by Gian Galeazzo Visconti in Milano. Nine years later, he is elected Prior-General of his Order, in which capacity he serves until 1410. He is a second time called to the Friership of the Certosa di Pontignano; then he serves in a similar capacity at the Certosa of S. Maria delle Grazie near Pavia from 1411 to 1421. There he dies in 1424.

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<sup>23</sup> C. LeCouteulx, Annales ord. Cartusiensis ab anno 1084 ad annum 1429, Montreuil-sur mer, 1887-1891, Vol. VI, p. 254.

<sup>24</sup> This testimony is contained in a letter addressed by Canigiani to his sister Maria Petriboni, who was then in the Convent of San Piero at Monticelli near Firenze. F. Grottanelli, Leggenda Minore di S. Caterina da Siena e Lettere dei Suoi Discepoli, pp. 163 et seq.

<sup>25</sup> C. M. Boutrais, La Grande Chartreuse par un Chartreux, Grenoble, 1930, pp. 82-83.

If contemporary communications and depositions are acceptable as supporting evidence in the courts of historiography, then a two-fold proof of Catherine's epistolary spiritual influence upon Stefano Maconi may be introduced, namely, communicational, that is, admissive evidence found in letters written by Stefano to Neri Pagliaresi; and depositional, that is, epodictical evidence found in the testimony which Stefano gives under oath at the time that a movement is on foot to have the cultus of Catherine recognized by the Church,

In a communication despatched to Neri Pagliaresi <sup>26</sup> a few days after he has entered the Carthusian monastery at Pontignano, Stefano tells him that he cannot conceal from him the fact that Catherine has amply shown in deed what she had many times promised him when she was alive - namely, constant encouragement and help, so that he may one day reach the road of spiritual perfection.

In another communication sent to Neri <sup>27</sup> - this time written as Prior of his Certosa - , Maconi gratefully speaks to him of the "spouse of obedience" which Catherine has given him and how he hopes that he will remain God's true servant to the end.

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26 This letter is dated May 30, 1381. P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. VI, pp. 91-94.

27 This communication bears the date, December 14, 1382. Ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 97-99.

The "spouse of obedience" given Stefano bespeaks the total fulfillment of the command issued to him by Catherine in 1390, namely, "And thee (Stefano), in virtue of holy obedience, I command in the name of God to go by all means to the Carthusian Order, for God has called and chosen thee to that." 28

The fulfillment of Catherine's final wish may be regarded as the crowning reward of Stefano's perseverance and fortitude and the prosecution of the Saint's catechistical epistles. Nor does he, who is later to receive the title of Blessed, hesitate to admit his indebtedness to Catherine. In the passage that follows below - which is to be found in his pre-canonization testimony -, Stefano confesses that next to God and the Virgin Mary, the one to whom he owes the greatest debt of gratitude for the change in his life, is Catherine of Siena. This is the very significant and meaningful paragraph: 29

But I cannot pass over in silence that after God and the most Blessed Virgin Mary, I feel more indebted to the holy virgin Catherine than to any other creature in the world, and if there has ever been any good in me I owe it to her.

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28 F. Grottanelli, op. cit., pp. 163 et seq.

29 The complete text of Stefano's testimonial letter is published in Latin by M.-E. Laurent, Il Processo Castellano, pp. 257-273. Pertinent extracts therefrom, which have been translated into English, are given in Appendix B. of this thesis.

As has been seen, Catherine, as an intermediary, has helped bring about a wonderful change in Stefano's life. However, it must be emphasized that neither Catherine nor her epistles have been the cause of his conversion. The cause has been his own will, aided, but not tyrannized over, by the Divine Goodness.

What, then, the thesis-writer has tried to establish, in the course of this chapter, is the fact that a series of circumstances, set in motion by Catherine's spiritual messages, has provided the occasion which induces Stefano's will to act.

True it is that Stefano's first meeting with Catherine does help open the eye of his intellect - a necessary factor for seeing the light of the faith. But faith itself is not a gift given to Stefano by Catherine, but rather by God Himself. Nor is his progress up the ladder of perfection attributable to the Virgin of Siena, but to the grace of God. She merely provides the steps - the epistles - to aid him upwards.

All of these epistles - twelve in number - had not, until recently, been available for an examination of their contents and influence on Stefano. In fact, in 1938, Johannes Jorgensen, who had spent much time in Siena studying Catherine's life

and the spiritual activities of her followers, speaks of "eight letters that she (Catherine) wrote to him (Maconi)." <sup>30</sup> We know now that Catherine's letters to Maconi number at least twelve. <sup>31</sup> Only parts of four of these letters have been put into English by Miss Scudder. <sup>32</sup>

The thesis-writer's modest contribution has been in rendering into English the entire contents of these twelve letters, in order the more accurately to ascertain the true relation of cause and effect in the chain of events surrounding Stefano's spiritual life from 1376 to 1380.

If letters are admissible as historical material, then Catherine's epistles are to be regarded as genuine historical material. <sup>33</sup> They have, therefore, been examined with the sole purpose in mind to determine in what way they have been consciously been prepared by Catherine to influence Stefano.

Since Catherine is constantly away from home between 1376 and 1380 - during the four years that she knows Stefano -, spending

30 J. Jorgensen, op. cit., p. 345.

31 These letters are numbered as follows in P. Misciattelli, Epistolario: CXCIV, CCV, CCXII, CCXCVIII, CCXXIX, CCXXX, CCCXXXIV, CCCXXXIX, CCCXXII, CCCLIV, CCCLVIII, CCCLXIS.

32 V. D. Scudder, op. cit., pp. 299-306.

33 Cf. J. P. Kirsch's article, "Ecclesiastical History", in The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. VII, pp. 366-380.

considerable time in Firenze, Belcaro, Rocca d'Ordia, Roma, Genoa, and Valcambrosa, she has to resort to letter-writing to communicate her thoughts to her disciples in Siena. Because she is unable personally to give her answers to a large number of questions of a spiritual nature which arise in Stefano's mind, she pens her answers to him, with a deliberate aim to influence him.

Of special interest are those letters which P. Misciattelli calls Catherine's first and last to Maconi,<sup>34</sup> for therein the thesis-writer discerns what, in a sense, may be called the first and last stages of Stefano's complete spiritual conversion.

In the first epistle, we see that Stefano has been suffering from a great deal of unrest, which he experiences after a period of comparative quiet; in the last, we notice that Maconi is beginning to experience some measure of satisfaction of mind, will, and emotions. To be sure, the letters in between, which are quite likely the ones to which Jorgensen refers, give an incomplete spiritual portrait of Stefano, for therein we see him merely seeking the substantial food of strong faith. The complete spiritual portrait is, therefore, furnished by the twelve epistles, for in these we are able to discern visible signs of the thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis of Stefano's spiritual conversion.

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34 P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Letters CXCIV and CCCLXII.

To sum up! What has been shown is that Stefano Maconi, who in early youth has been given to mundane pleasure, is led to the state of spiritual perfection by the guiding hand of Catherine, the epistler. Being closely attached to his immediate family, he finds it extremely difficult, at first, to break the ties which bind him to his parents.

Catherine's epistles slowly but surely begin to unfold to him the principles of revealed teaching. They point out to him that peace cannot come to him except through perfection; and that advancement in perfection is progress in life which, for man - God's image and likeness -, means progress in the Divine Life given him by grace.

Thus, the Saint's letters successfully explain to Maconi the fact that man lives in God's Only-Begotten Son in proportion to the degree of sanctifying grace that is in his (man's) soul. Therefore, a great measure of sanctifying grace means a high state of spiritual vitality; a small measure, low spiritual vitality.

It is no small wonder, then, that Maconi makes God the term of his actions. Indeed, God becomes the object towards which he attempts to direct all the energies of his soul. Nor is he forgetful of his benefactress, his Siamese "Mamma". He is forever doing something, be it big or small, to promote her honor. He it is who translates into Italian the Leggenda Minore of Fra Tommaso Gaffarini, and transmits a copy of it to the King of England.

He it is, too, who, in cooperation with England's William Flote, carries on one of Catherine's works with great success, namely, the reconciliation of enemies. But about William Flote, whom the Italians would rather call "Frate Guglielmo Flota" or "Il Baccelliere Guglielmo d'Inghilterra," more will be said shortly.

## CHAPTER IV

### WILLIAM FLETE AND THE ESSENCE OF ANACOLUTHY

Stefano Naconi's friend, William Flete, the Cambridge educated Augustinian hermit who eventually becomes a member of Catherine's spiritual family, visits Tuscany for the first time in 1362, when the Siamese saint is but an adolescent girl.

What Catherine sees in this taciturn and ungainly Englishman who speaks Italian imperfectly and detests sin, which has virtually entrenched itself upon certain regions of the Italian peninsula, is revealed in the six extant letters <sup>1</sup> which the Siamese virgin dispatches to Flete.

Of these six epistles which the saint of Siena addresses to the English Augustinian, only three are available in English translation. It is the contents of the three letters <sup>2</sup> which this writer has turned into the English tongue, that bring out Catherine's Tuscan temperament, perhaps more clearly than any other group of messages written by her.

Catherine, an impetuous and extrovert person, is the opposite, temperamentally, of William Flete, a phlegmatic and introvert individual. Yet, Father Flete, whom some of his Italian neighbors accuse, probably with exaggeration, of tale-bearing

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1 Only six of Catherine's letters to Flete survive. They are numbered as follows in P. Miaciattelli's Epistolario: LXIV, LXVI, LXVII, CXXVII, CXXII, and CXXVI.

2 The thesis-writer has reference to letters LXVI, LXVII and CXXVII. These letters appear, respectively, in Volumes I, II, and III of P. Miaciattelli's Epistolario.

and extra-continental bias, succumbs to Catherine's epistolary influence and, finally, dies in the odour of sanctity.

Examined as logical connecting links, the six letters dispatched to William Flete by the saintly epistler lay open the fact that the shut-in, dreary and meditative English hermit is given somewhat to talking unwittingly about the faults of those about him.

It is Catherine's spiritual messages which point out to him his frailties; whereupon he takes the saint's advice with deep humility and becomes more charitable towards the brethren in his order and also takes an active part in reconciling feuding families.

Now Catherine's spiritual admonitions successfully impress the ideal of a truly consecrated affection upon England's scholarly and solitude loving William Flete, constitutes one of the most exciting and inspiring spiritual achievements of the Sienese letter-writer.

Flete, according to the Sienese virgin's lofty standards of spiritual perfection, appears to be lacking primarily in the virtue of amiability. Living his life in an Augustinian hermit's cell in the Forest of Lecceto, Italy, he gives signs of having become egocentric, impatient, intolerant and an utterer of carping criticism anent his brother Augustinians.

Catherine carefully analyzes the perils that beset him. One-sided asceticism, she points out, is dangerous.<sup>3</sup> She advises him to be amiable - that is, to be agreeable and cheerful under all circumstances. Aniability, says the saint of Siena, is more than mere sweetness of temper. It is thoughtfulness of others' rights and feelings. It is the unconscious desire to give happiness, born of happiness.

Of course, she stresses the all-important fact that Brother William can encourage the virtue of amiability only by trying not to see the annoying circumstances about him, and by putting away the irritations at the moment of their appearance. Aniability, then, is the mastery of self, the subjection of disagreeable moods and impatient tempers. It is the ruling of the evil spirit within us.

In order effectively to rule one's spirit, Catherine sometimes, one must first slay self-will. The slayer of self-will is he who feeds at the table of penitence, is humble and good, and lives no longer to his own will, or the way and spirit of the world, but to the sole will of God. To be sure, it is he who considers God in everything, who serves God in everything, who makes all the parts of his common life parts of piety, by doing everything in the name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to His glory.

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<sup>3</sup> Catherine clearly advises Brother William "Not to be negligent in following it (the Way), and not to sit yourself down in self-love, ignorantly failing to know the Way, and presumptuously wishing to choose it after your own fashion" ("Non siete voi dunque negligente a seguirla, ponendovi a sedere con amore proprio di voi, e con ignoranza di non cognoscere la via, e con presunzione di volerla eleggere a vostro modo"). P. Micciattelli, *op. cit.*: Vol. I, p. 341.

In examining the spiritual advice which Catherine gives to her "son in religion" in the relevant epistle cited below, one notes that the saint's desire and purpose is to lead Fleete, from what appears to her to be his spiritually imperfect manner of living, to the spiritually perfect way of life. Thus runs one of the most persuasive and most beautiful counsel imbued passages which Catherine has ever written: <sup>4</sup>

Oh, purified and pacified minds, who are clothed with the sweet garment of the Lamb, His love and charity, and who feed at the table of holy desire because, having attained in great light, you may partake of the holy food - you do not lose time in accepting false judgments, either of the servants of God or of the servants of the world. You do not take offence at any criticism, either against yourselves or others. Your love toward God and your neighbor is well governed and not ungoverned. And because it is governed, such men as these, dearest son, never take offence at those whom they love; for appearances are dead to them, and they have submitted themselves not to be guided by men, but only by the Holy Spirit. See, then, these enjoy in this life the pledge of life eternal.

Would that I could see you and the other unknowing sons reach this light, for I see that this perfection is lacking to you and to others. For, were it not lacking to you, you would not have fallen into such criticism and offence and false judgment, as to say and believe that another man was guided and mastered by the will of the creature and not of the Creator.

Throughout her series of epistolary sermons, Catherine continues to lay particular emphasis upon the true meanings of

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4 P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 242-243. A lengthier extract from this communication is appended to this thesis as addendum "C".

tolerance, amiability, justice and love. For instance, she explains to Flete and to some of his temporarily misguided companions that tolerance does not mean keeping oneself aloof, or mere affableness. It must spring from the depths of true love and amiableness; for all love and affection that tends to purify, ennoble, elevate and Christianize one's fellow-men, is born of a desire to do God's will.<sup>5</sup> Thus, there can be no love without justice and no justice without love. One is the counterpart of the other. What is, then, needed by the misguided soul is an awakened sense of justice in order to correct the wrong or tale-bearing and the saying of unkind things. To be sure, an aroused sense of justice demands of the misdirected soul that he be godly as well as manly.

Nor does the Sieneſe epistler leave Brother William without a method of attainment. She tells him to be steeped through faith and practice in positive qualities, and then he will not have time for negative qualities. Just as living entirely in the flesh extinguishes the flame of the spirit, so the contrary effect will be produced by living in the spirit.

With Catherine, the greatest positive virtues are charity and love. She uses these terms interchangeably; for, care (dear) means to her a love (amore) which esteems the beloved at a high value.

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<sup>5</sup> The Sieneſe virgin ſays to Brother William: "I tell you that as ſoon as the ſoul has opened (the eye of) the underſtanding, ſhe becomes the lover of God's honor and of creatures. She becomes the lover of ſufferings; and ſhe delights only in crosſebearing with Him" (Dicovi che ſubito che l'anima ha aperto lo intendimento, diventa amatrice dell'onore di Dio e delle creature; diventa amatrice di pene; e non ſi diletta altro che in croce con lui.") P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 25.

Adhering to the true Christian interpretation of charity, she emphasizes, especially for William's sake, that God, our primary "natural object" of charity, we must love with an absolute love - with a love which is not referred from Him to another being. However, as children of God we must love one another. In doing so, we love ourselves with charity as the children of the Heavenly Father. This charity denotes a form of friendship, Catherine explains, which is extended to ourselves as reflecting or representing God, Who made us with His own Hand and Whose image we bear, no matter how unworthily. <sup>6</sup>

She, therefore, points out to Fratello Flete that even our greatest enemies must be loved, inasmuch as God, the infinitely attractive Being, is seen in them, His children, no matter how odious may be their deeds. The following is a substantial portion

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6 Catherine directs Flete's attention to the fact that  
 "(God) created us for His own honor and glory, and that  
 we might taste and enjoy His supreme and eternal gifts"  
 "(Dio) ci creò per gloria e loda del nome suo, e perche'  
 godessimo e gustassimo il sommo ed eterno bene suo".  
 P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 302.

of the Siennese Mystic's admonitory missive on the importance  
of loving one's neighbor: <sup>7</sup>

Let your love for your neighbor be clean.  
Love, love one another. You are neighbors one  
of the other. But be on your guard, for if your  
love were founded in your own profit or in the  
private affection which you might have for one  
another, it would not endure, but would fail, and  
your soul would find itself empty. The love which  
is founded in God must be of such a sort that it has  
to love with regard to virtue, and inasmuch as the  
friend is a creature made in the image of God. For  
while delight in him whom I love, or profit from him  
may grow less, if one abides in God love does not  
fail, because one loves with regard to virtue and  
the honor of God, and not to one's own personality.

I say that if one abides in God, even if virtue  
should fail in him who loves, yet love does not turn  
away. The love of the virtue which is not there  
fails to be sure; but it does not fail in so far as  
a man is a creature of God, His member, bound in the  
mystical body of the Holy Church. Nay, there grows  
within one a love made up of great and true compas-  
sion, and with desire he brings his friend to the  
birth, with tears and sighs and continual prayers in  
the sweet Presence of God.

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<sup>7</sup> Catherine's missive was addressed "To Brother William and  
to Messer Matteo, Rector of the Misericordia, and to  
Brother Santi of Terni, and to Her Other Sons."  
P. Misciattelli, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 229-230.

Catherine, noticing that her well-meaning but somewhat absent-minded spiritual son stands in need of having the epistolary spiritual lesson repeated more than once, virtually commands him to observe and study the manner in which Christ Crucified bore Himself in each circumstance, in order that he, Brother William, might learn to imitate, or better to reproduce in himself, His manner of acting. <sup>8</sup>

She urges him to be humble as Christ was humble; for His words, His works, His virtues, His sufferings - nay, His perfect endurance of shame and humiliations, are the direct consequence of His humility. Thus, the perfection of God-the-Son's human virtue is derived, in a certain sense, from the perfection of His humility. Indeed, Jesus was, in Himself, the perfect expression of the humility of childhood that He recommended to His followers, as the final and complete flowering of the Christian spirit. He was eminently the "child of God" and hence eminently humble with the gracious and flawless humility of immaculate childhood.

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<sup>8</sup> Catherine, whose letter abounds in paradigms, parenthetically points out to William that "They (who would feed at the table of holy desire) lose themselves, divesting themselves of the old man, their selfish desires, and array themselves in the new man, Christ sweet Jesus, following Him manfully" ("Perdono loro medesimi, spogliandosi dell'uomo vecchio, cioè della propria sensualità, e vestonsi dell'uomo nuovo Cristo dolce Gesù seguitandolo virilmente"). P. Nisicattelli, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 241-242.

With the passage of time, Flete's piety increases. But it appears from a message conveyed to Catherine, that one stumbling-block, perhaps a minor one, prevents Brother William from reaching the road that leads to spiritual perfection. This stumbling-stone is embedded in his desire to detach himself from the fellowship of his brethren. In fact, Catherine reprimands him for continually absenting himself from the convent and for spending much of his time in the woods with his books; for this habit has begun to annoy the Prior, who, it seems, must have informed the saint of Siena of Flete's absences.

Without mincing words, Catherine proceeds to reprove William for his unbecoming conduct, in this manner: <sup>9</sup>

I must tell you on the part of our Lord, that you ought to say mass in the convent more than once a week if the Prior wishes it. I would even say that you should celebrate there every day if that is his desire. You will not lose grace by sacrificing your consolations. You will rather gain more in proportion as you give up your own will.

If we would show our hunger for souls and our love of our neighbor, we must not be attached to consolations; we must listen to other people's troubles, and have compassion on those who are bound to us by the bonds of charity. It is a great fault if you do not do this.

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<sup>9</sup> P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 26-27.

Does William listen attentively to, and follow humbly, the bulk of Catherine's spiritual advice? It seems reasonable to entertain an affirmative belief. One or two or three important facts would certainly fortify this belief. It is the fact that Catherine sees fit to confide to Flete the doctrine of holy hate. Had he not progressed upon the road of spiritual sacrifices, she assuredly would not have felt free to reveal to him so important a teaching.

This teaching, upon which her entire spiritual creed may be said to rest, the saintly epistler dictates to Flete of Lecceto about four years before her death. The essential part of its contents is revealed by him in the following words: <sup>10</sup>

The holy mother, speaking of herself as of a third person, said that in the beginning of her illumination she placed as the foundation of her whole life, in opposition to self-love, the stone of self-knowledge, which she separated into the three following little stones:

The first was the consideration of her creation. The second was the consideration of her redemption. The third was the consideration of her own sins.

From these three considerations there arose within her so great a hatred against herself, that she desired nothing whatever conformable to her own will, but only to the will of God, Who, as she already knew, willed nothing but her good. From this it followed that every tribulation or trial was to her a matter of pleasure and delight, not only because it came through the will of God, but also because she saw herself to be thereby punished and chastised.

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<sup>10</sup> William Flete, *Narratio fr. Guilielmi de spirituali doctrina oraculis vive vocis beate Katherine habita in anno 1376. die 7. Januarii*. The entire contents of the doctrine are published by G. Gigli, *op. cit.*, as an appendix to the *Dialogo*. The original manuscript is numbered MS.T. II, 7, which is to be found in the Biblioteca Municipale of Siena, Italy.

Taken together, Catherine's secretly dictated credo and the epistles written to Flote form beautiful lessons in love, charity, justice, tolerance, and amiability. Upon the virtue of amiability - which may, in a sense, be called the crown of character - she lays unusually great stress. She fortifies her counsels and admonitions by continually drawing illustrations and parallel examples from Holy Scripture and the life of Christ.

For instance, Catherine exhorts Flote to be friendly as Jesus Himself was friendly. She reminds him that no earthly creature has ever made so many sacrifices for a friend as Christ has made for us. So great has been His love for man that He even laid down His life for His friends. In fact, He has done more than this for us. When we were His enemies, He made us his friends, and then He surrendered His life for us.

It is well to remember, says Catherine, that in acquiring our friendship, He has nothing to gain. In being deprived of our friendship, He has nothing to lose. We are all the gainers in enjoying His blessed society. We are all the losers when it is withdrawn from us. We come to Him empty-handed, or if we have any gift to offer Him, it is the fruit of His bounty. He comes to us laden with gifts. He brings to us joy and interior sunshine. He brings us peace and tranquillity of heart. The words which He spoke to us in the Gospel linger in our memory like some delicious fragrance.

It behooves all mankind, continues the virgin of Siena, to reflect upon the fact the Jesus' friendship and love for man bespeaks true amiability. It is imperative, then, that man follow in His footsteps. Always remember, she cautions the good Friar of Lecceto, that it is essential to true friendship that it be reciprocal. A one-sided attachment can never be called friendship. In the judgment of mankind, there is no crime so base as ingratitude towards a friend. Our Savior bore in silence the injuries and insults offered to Him during His passion. There was one offence which extorted from Him the expression of painful emotion, and that was the treachery of Judas, whom he had associated among His special friends.

That Catherine's epistolary lessons do make a distinct and indelible imprint upon the mind and life of Brother William, is attested to by those of his contemporaries who know him well, and is freely admitted by the Augustinian friar himself.

Thus, the notary and disciple of the epistler of Siena, Ser Cristofano di Gano Guidini, who has left us his memoirs of Catherine, assures us that Flate has taken all her oral and

written admonitions in good part, for he is determined to perfect himself spiritually. <sup>11</sup>

Father A. A. Tantucci, the translator of the third part of the Supplementum written in Latin by Flete's other contemporary, Fra Tommaso Gaffarini, informs us that "after Catherine's death, Fra Guglielmo Flete drew up a compendious legend of the prodigious virtues of the Saint in the form of a sermon, or panegyric. Our author (Fra Tommaso of Siena) states that both whilst living in Siena and also at Venice he had often seen this sermon." <sup>12</sup>

Indeed, it is Brother William Flete's own encomiastical words, as they are embodied in this sermon, which prove beyond a doubt the fact that the saintly epistler's influence on him is great and that his love for her is profound. Thus runs

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11 Guidini, C., Memorie di Ser Cristofano di Galgano da Siena scritte da lui medesimo nel secolo XIV. Ed. C. Milanese. Vol. IV, pp. 31 ff. Cf. P. Misciattelli, who writes that "She speaks to him [William] with severity, not fearing to offend him...But the Englishman listened to her and honored her more with nobility than flattery" (Gli parla severo, non temendo d'offenderlo... E l'Inglese la intese, e onore lei con nobilita più nobile d'ogni albagia"). Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 244, Footnote #1.

12 A. A. Tantucci (tr.), Supplemento all'avulzata leggenda di Santa Caterina da Siena, scritta da fr. Tommaso Gaffarini. It is found in Vol. V. of G. Gigli's Opere, Lucca, 1754. Reprinted, Rome, 1866.

a pertinent portion of this panegyric: <sup>13</sup>

How many blasphemers, obstinate sinners grown old in vice, and those who had never named the name of God, or obeyed His Church, were by her [Catherine's] means converted and brought to penance! She despised no one, she rejected no one, not even the greatest sinners. She welcomed all who came to her, sometimes prostrating and kneeling to them, at other times pressing them to her heart. She suffered many to kiss her hand - she, the border of whose garments they were not worthy to touch.

Wee to us, her children, unworthy of the name! Wee to us, because we can no longer have recourse to that most sweet mother! What teaching she would give us, how to live, and how to direct our souls!

Alas, we can no more run to her as we used to do, saying, 'Let us go, let us go and see our sweetest mother!' Never more shall we read those letters dictated by the Holy Spirit. Never more shall we be fed with the food of her familiar words, never never more.

This is, indeed, a beautiful tribute to Catherine. However, William Flete, who has ascended from virtue to virtue, and has grown every day more holy, is fully cognizant of the fact that spiritual perfection can come only by Divine help.

But has not Catherine reminded him that without God man can do nothing? Of course, she has.

She, too, it is who has continually stressed the fact that the perfection of man is measured by the perfection with which he tends to seek and attach himself to God. But the human will

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13 William Flete, Sermo in reverentiam Beatae Katharinae de Senis, compositus in Anno Domini MCCCXXIII, per. mag. Servum Dei Anglicum qui vocatus est frater Guilielmus de Anglia de Ord. Eremit. S. Augustini. This sermon has been published by R. Fawtier, "Catheriniana", in Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire, t. XXXIV, 1914, pp. 40-75. The original MS. appears as Cod. T.ii.7, a, c, 17, in the Biblioteca Municipale of Siena, Italy.

must first prepare itself for God; and this preparation of the will cannot take place without meritorious works.

However, Catherine tells Flete nothing with which he is not already familiar; for he is a priest of the Church and a spiritual writer of some repute.<sup>14</sup> At any rate, because he is anxious to improve himself spiritually, he consents to listen to Catherine, "the servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ." She, the "Mamma Spirituale", feeds him the necessary spiritual food, for which he constantly longs and eagerly consumes.<sup>15</sup>

But because she helps lead William to the table of Holy desire, may she be regarded as the principal contributor to his victory in the battle for spiritual perfection? To think so would be an utter presumption.

It is true that Catherine, by means of her letters, urges William to proceed fearlessly onwards in his battle against pernicious influences. However, she acts merely as an auxiliary mover. The Prime Mover is the Holy Ghost, Who, finding that

14 Flete has been credited with the following writings, besides those already cited: Obsecro in Domino Jesu. Cum timore Dei, et reverentia, and Alt enim Apostolus. Spectaculum. J. Fils, Relationum historicarum de rebus anglicis. Parisiis, apud Robinum Thierry, & Sebastianum Cramoisy, 1619, Tom. 1, p. 521. A sketch of Flete's spiritual and literary life is given in Appendix D at the end of this dissertation.

15 Cf. Father Laurent, who, having re-edited the Flete correspondence, observes a truly great desire on the part of the Augustinian friar for spiritual nutriment. M.-H. Laurent, "De litteris ineditis fr. Willelmi de Flete", in Analecta Augustiniana. Tom. XVIII, 1942, pp. 303-327.

Blessed William Flete <sup>16</sup> has subdued his own will and properly prepared himself for grace, motions him to turn himself to the Eternal Father.

In conclusion, several facts have been introduced, in the course of this chapter, about the case of William Flete. As a middle-aged clergyman holding an academic degree from the famous Cambridge University, he elects to settle down among the Augustinian friars of the Convent of the Wood at Lucceto, Italy.

Having been among these friars but a short time, he decides to leave their company for a quieter place in the forests of Lucceto, where he devotes the whole day to works of penance and to study, returning to the convent only at dusk.

Word reaches Catherine, with whom he is acquainted but whom he does not often see, that Flete has begun to criticize his brethren and that he is placing too great an emphasis upon self-mortification. A series of epistles is despatched to him by Catherine, who unfolds to him the true meaning of amiability and also points out to him that the conquest of one's will is more important than the mortification of one's body. She advises him, above all, not to mar his perfection by making himself a judge of those about him who do not wish to follow his spiritual example.

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<sup>16</sup> Flete enjoyed among his own brethren the repute of sanctity. The English Augustinians refer to him as "the Blessed William Flete." J. Pitts, *loc. cit.*

He now begins more seriously to contemplate the spiritual side of his being. He begins to study the Spirit of Christ, His attitude, and His disposition. Was He not brotherly and friendly to all? Indeed, to Jesus brotherliness is the essence of true religion; fellowship is cardinal and indispensable.

As Catherine so well tells William, brotherliness expresses itself in companionship, communion, and co-operation. He who is careful to mortify his body but is indifferent to fellowship, is unknowing of the fundamentals of spiritual perfection.

It has, finally, been seen that Catherine has not played the rôle of chief contributor to Flete's success along the road to perfection. She has acted merely as an instrument, whose epistles have guided him in the knowledge of the Spirit of Jesus Christ and the love that honors His Father.

It is, again, as an instrument that the saint of Siena helps mold Flete's co-disciple, Raimondo da Capua, into a valiant soldier of Christ's army. But the Capua case is due for an analysis in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER V

### RAIMONDO DA CAPUA: A MANFUL KNIGHT OF CHRIST

The person in Catherine's later life who probably receives most of her "sweetest spiritual reprimands" is Blessed William Flete's fellow-ecclesiast, Beato Raimondo delle Vigne da Capua, a descendant of Pietro delle Vigne - the statesman who once held the post of Chancellor to Sicily's mighty Emperor Frederick II.

Fra Raimondo, who in 1374 is officially appointed Catherine's last confessor, is well equipped to act as her spiritual adviser. Her has had a diversified experience. He has authored a commentary on the "Magnificat" and a biography of Santa Agnese of Montepulciano, and has been prior of the Minerva at Rome, director of the convent of Dominican nuns of Santa Agnese at Montepulciano, and professor of theology at San Domenico at Siena.

However, Fra Raimondo's profound learning and commanding position as confessor do not deter the saintly letter-writer from issuing spiritual admonitions to the good Dominican friar.

It must be remembered, though, that Catherine's Italy is ruled by pleasure and guided by chance. It is an Italy inhabited by those who, observes the saint, "poison and devastate the garden of the Church."<sup>1</sup> Quick is she, therefore, to summon the aid of all her disciples to help check the expanding wave of sin; and

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1 N. Tommaseo (Ed.), Le Lettere di S. Caterina da Siena, Vol. III, pp. 114, 159 et seq.

those who hesitate even momentarily to manifest their undivided love of Christ and His Holy Church, receive immediately her epistolical rebukes.

The etiology of the disease which has been attacking the true and living religion of Christ, as well as the manner in which Raimondo is deputized to combat it, is uniquely depicted in Catherine's epistles to her confessor, to whom she sends at least seventeen.<sup>2</sup> Up until the present time, only eight letters had been put into the tongue of English readers. The remaining nine letters<sup>3</sup> have been turned from their original Tuscan vernacular into English by the thesis-writer.

The disease that befalls Italy is of a two-fold nature; physical and moral. Biologically, it stems from three major ills: First, the Bubonic Plague, which blasts Italy in 1340, 1348, and 1361; second, the condottieri, who swarm over the Italian peninsula like locusts; third, the Italian tyrants, who give themselves to dissipation and cruelty.

Among the most wicked evil-doers of this period, is Milan's

- 2 Editor P. Misciattelli has assigned these epistles the following Roman numerals: VII, C, CII, CIV, CCXI, CCKXVI, CCKIX, CCLXVII, CCLXXII, CCLXXIII, CCLXXV, CCLXXX, CCKCV, CCKXXI, CCKXXIII, CCKXLIV, and CCKLXIII.
- 3 Reference is made to the letters which follow: VII, C, CII, CIV, CCKXVI, CCLXXV, CCLXXX, CCKXXI, and CCKLXIII. These letters and also the eight originals from which English translations were made in 1905 by Miss V. D. Scudder are distributed throughout five of the six volumes of Signor Misciattelli's Epistolario.

tyrant, Bernabo Visconti (1354-1385), the arch-enemy of the Apostolic See. To the distinguished Florentine citizen, Niccolò Soderini, whose State has allied itself with Visconti in a war against the Papacy, Catherine appealingly writes in this manner: <sup>4</sup>

What is sweeter than peace? It was the last will and testament which Jesus Christ left to His disciples, when He said, 'You shall not be known as My disciples by working miracles, nor by forstelling the future, nor by great holiness shown forth in all your actions, but only if you shall live together in charity and peace and love.' So great is my grief at this war which will destroy so many among you, body and soul, that I would readily, if it were possible, give my life a thousand times to stop it.

In a more trenchant and unsparing language she upbraids Visconti for his unjust action against the Church. She condemns his sacrilegious stand thus: <sup>5</sup>

Since the Vicar of Christ is so firmly established, and of such virtue and power, that he can open and close the door of eternal life, aren't we, corrupt members and rebellious children, utterly stupid to carry on a war against him? Well do we see, that without him we can do nothing. If you are against Holy Mother Church, how can you partake of the Blood of the Son of God? For, remember - the Church is Christ.

But Catherine desires more than peace among the enemies of Christ and His Vicar on earth. She wants, in addition, a renovation of morals, the extirpation of evil; wherefore, she animatedly directs

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<sup>4</sup> M. Tommaseo, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 13, 14.

<sup>5</sup> L. Ferretti, Lettere di Santa Caterina da Siena vergine domenicana. Vol. III, p. 88.

Fra Raimondo to spread vigorously the Word of Christ, whom she continually calls the "Primal Truth" and the "humble and immaculate Lamb of Peace." <sup>6</sup>

To be sure, Raimondo must become a fearless Knight of Christ; for, as she vividly though sorrowfully tells him, the Church is becoming "pale through loss of blood which has been drained by insatiable devourers." <sup>7</sup>

Slowly, almost timidly, Raimondo embarks upon his spiritual campaign against the foes of God and Truth. His apparent timidity annoys Catherine; whereupon she writes him, "with the desire to see you risen above your childishness" <sup>8</sup> and to see "you shed your milk teeth and eat bread, the mustier the better," <sup>9</sup> in order the better to espouse the noble cause of Christ and His Church.

But is Brother Raimondo really afraid to intensify his campaign against heartless tyranny, blood-fouls, debauchery, and anti-clericalism? It can hardly be thought so; indeed, he is a man of deep thought and deliberation, and not easily deceived by what he sees and hears. <sup>10</sup> Is he not, at first, skeptical of Catherine's

6 P. Misciattelli, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 221-226, pp. 266-270; Vol. IV, pp. 10-14; Vol. V, pp. 148-156.

7 M. Tommaseo, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 173-174.

8 P. Misciattelli, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 95. The Tuscan version runs thus: "Con desiderio di vedervi oggiaai levato dalla fanciullezza vostra."

9 *Ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 95, 96. Equally interesting is her juxtaposed hortatory expression, namely: "Studiamoci di mettere i denti gravati dell'odio e dell'amore" (Let us be intent upon furnishing ourselves with the permanent teeth of hate and love"). *Loc. Cit.*

10 Raimondo delle Vigne da Capua, *Legenda*, II, xii.6.

visions and revelations? Does he not hesitate to record as gospel truth everything that she and some of her disciples tell him about her messages from Heaven? Is he not amused by her uncompromising stand in Christianity? Does he not appear to be irked by her ceaseless attempts to force her will upon him as the will of Almighty God?

But she, who feels her whole life is an Act of Faith, convinces Brother Raimondo of her sincerity and self-imposed spiritual mission. For, one day, he exclaims: "Verily thou [Catherine] art the true bride and disciple of my Lord and my God." <sup>11</sup>

Yet, he several times disappoints Catherine by his passiveness and apparent slowness in executing her commands. Thus, for his special benefit, she conveys to him her idea of an exemplary "manful knight of God the Son" ("cavaliere virile del Figlio di Dio"). <sup>12</sup> It is he, says she, who joyously and exultingly bears "pain, triumphs and vexations for Christ Crucified" <sup>13</sup> and who helps cast out of the Temple those who vend and purchase the gifts of the Holy Spirit. <sup>14</sup>

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11 Raimondo delle Vigne da Capua, op. cit., I. ix. 6 et seq.; II. xii. 8.

12 P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 23.

13 Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 222-223.

14 N. Tommaseo, op. cit., Letter 219.

She continues in this vein: Christ's manful knight "does not avoid blows";<sup>15</sup> nor does he flee or grieve in "the time of darkness, since from the darkness light is born".<sup>16</sup> The Siennese epistler then lectures Raimondo on how the manful knight of the Redeemer may become perfectly virtuous by successfully combating all manner of evil, and how he should prefer death rather than offend Almighty God.<sup>17</sup>

In spite of her exhortations, Catherine subsequently discovers that she has expected too much from Padre Raimondo. From this scholarly, yet simple, modest and over-cautious, Dominican she has demanded unbounded heroism and sought for him continual sorrow, hardships, and even the chance to offer his life in exalted sacrifice for the transgressions of mankind, especially for the sins of those who are calumniating Christ's Church and besmearing her face.<sup>18</sup>

The contents of at least one-half of Catherine's letters to her Dominican confessor indicate that, in the middle of her ceaseless struggles

15 P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 222.

16 Ibid., Vol. III, p. 223.

17 Ibid., Vol. III, p. 224.

18 Cf. V. P. Scudder, who says this of the good Father Raimondo: "His figure might well have belonged to the trecento rather than to the more strenuous age that followed. He was the simplest, the most modest of men - albeit by no means lacking in homely shrewdness... Catherine, like most uplifted natures, demanded heroism from those dear to her, as a matter of course. Others wish for their beloved ease, delights, the gratification of ambition and desire; Catherine sought for them sorrow, hardships, the opportunity to offer their lives in exalted sacrifice for the sins of the world. She craved for them only less passionately than for herself, the crowning grace of martyrdom." Op. cit., p. 323. Cf. also Father M.-H. Laurent, who praises Blessed Raimondo's ability as an ambassador, in "S. Caterina da Siena e il B. Raimondo da Capua, ambasciatore della S. Sede presso Carlo V." in Studi Cateriniani, Tom. XII, 1936, pp. 1-51. But cf., too, Father E. Cartier, one of the later French Catherine writers, who prefatorily sketches the life of Raimondo in La Vie de S. Catherine de Sienne, Paris, 1853. Excerpts therefrom will be found in Appendix E of this thesis.

with the neo-crucifiers of the Son of God, Raimondo does not give her the undivided assistance that she begs of him.

Yet, in a portion of the epistle which follows below the Siennese saint does not reproach him bitterly for his lack of courage; rather, she is understanding and even appreciably courteous, though she reveals in nearly every paragraph the sense of solitude which the unexpected lack of action of her confessor has caused her: 19

Seemingly, if I interpret your letter correctly, you have experienced many diverse battles and troubled reflections, through the deceit of Satan and through your own fearfulness, it appearing to you that a burden had been imposed on you greater than you could bear. You have not seemed to yourself strong enough for me to measure you with my measure, and on this account you have been in doubt lest my affection and love to you had diminished.

Let not your eyes see things as impossible to do, nor the torment that may follow; but let them see with the light of faith that through Christ Crucified you can do all things, and that God will not impose a greater burden than can be borne.

I love you immeasurably for your salvation, and desire with great earnestness to see you in the state of the perfect; therefore, I pray you with many words, and I use reprehensions with you, in order that you may return continually to yourself. I have done my best, and I shall do so, to make you assume the burden of the perfect for the honor of God, and ask His goodness to make you reach the last state of perfection.

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19 P. Misciattelli, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 148-156.

But upon how many more "rungs" in the ladder of spiritual perfection must Raimondo da Capua lay his hands before Catherine will allow herself to say to him "perfect!"? Is it really possible that physical and moral courage has thus far prevented him from reaching "the last stage of perfection"? It would hardly be fair to say so.

To be sure, courage of itself is neither good nor bad. Its worth depends on its exercise. As Catherine repeatedly tells Raimondo, it takes courage to espouse the cause of Christ and Church and stand virtually alone against the attacks of brutal tyranny, blasphemy, and impiety. In fact, to espouse a righteous cause often requires, Catherine points out, more courage than to lead a charge in battle. But, then, Christ loves and admires the man who dares to look Satan in the face and tell him frankly that he is Satan.

Catherine, writing quite boldly to her confessor, says to him that, "as grown-up persons, let us run to the battlefield, and, once there, let us place ourselves in a strong position, with one cross in front and another behind us, in order that we may not flee."<sup>20</sup>

It is, therefore, obvious that it is the Siennese Virgin's desire that Raimondo serve God boldly. Thus, she commands him more than once that he throw himself boldly into the battle and, if need be, "give his life for Christ Crucified."<sup>21</sup> This, explains she,

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<sup>20</sup> P. Misciattelli, op. cit. Vol. V, p. 98.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., Vol. II, p. 119.

is the essence of courage. It is the daring to do what is right. It is inspired by virtue, honor, mercy and justice. It bespeaks a resistance to fear - nay, a mastery of fear. It is courage in man that enables him to meet danger and hardship without fear, and to overcome it. With Catherine, then, the expression, "to take courage", is synonymous with the other, "to have heart." <sup>22</sup>

Raimondo, who, like William Flete, prefers to outside activity his books and the quiet of his friary, now defies fear and, after many days of perseverance, wins Catherine's preliminary plaudits for his Christian knightliness. She informs him quite happily that "perfection is near you." <sup>23</sup> She, however, exhorts him to "carry on all your works with living faith." <sup>24</sup>

The Siennese epistler finally expresses her deep sense of gratitude to her confessor in these emotion filled words: <sup>25</sup>

Thanks, thanks be the Highest God Eternal, Who has placed us in the battlefield as knights, to fight for His Bride with the shield of holiest faith. The field is won. The victory is ours.

A more personal note of Catherine's appreciation of her confessor's noble services to Christ and Church, is the following which she despatches to him: "Great are my consolation and gladness to see the fruit that you are bearing in Holy Church." <sup>26</sup>

22 F. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 146; Vol. V, pp. 86, 95, 96, and 97.

23 The Tuscan original reads: "La perfezione e presso da voi." F. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 224.

24 G. Gigli, op. cit., Letter 103.

25. F. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 225.

26 The original version runs thus: "Maggiore m' è la consolazione e L'allegrezza di vedere il frutto che fate nella santa Chiesa." Ibid., Vol. V, p. 292.

The last two commendations constitute sufficient direct epistolary evidence in support of the contention that Catherine has shed a tremendous amount of influence on Raimondo. But, very likely the most incontestable testimonial certifying the Sienese virgin's penetrating influence on her last confessor, is the latter's Legenda<sup>27</sup> of the Saint, which uniquely stands out as a beautiful monument to her greatness as mystic, teacher, epistler, author and peacemaker.

Catherine the author indicates her faith and trust, not only in Raimondo da Capua, but also in four other literary executors, to whom she commends her works. She is particularly concerned about the Book, or Dialogo, in which she treats in a simple and familiar manner the elements of Christianity.

She directly beseeches Raimondo thus:<sup>28</sup>

Get into your hands the Book and all my writings which you can find - you, Fra Bartolommeo, Fra Tommaso, the Maestro, the Messer Tommaso -, and do with them what you see to be the most to the honor of God.

In each and everyone of the seventeen letters which she despatches to Raimondo, appear the mystical and ecstatic outpourings of Catherine's heart which find fuller expression in her

27 G. Gigli has included an Italian translation of Raimondo's Legenda in the first volume of his Opere.

28 M. Tommaseo, op. cit., Letter 373. In this passage, the men mentioned are identified as follows: Fra Bartolommeo di Domenico, Catherine's second confessor; Fra Tommaso Caffarini, the Dominican friar and Catherinian disciple who published the Supplement to Fra Raimondo's Legenda and also an Abridgment in Latin thereof; Fra Giovanni Tantucci, who, having received a master-of-theology degree at Cambridge University in William Flote's days, had gained a fine reputation as a teacher and preacher; Messer Tommaso Petra, then one of the Papal Secretaries, with whom, during one of her stays in Rome, Catherine became acquainted.

Dialogo. More so in the epistles addressed to him than in any other group of letters, she refers to her symbols of love, which are blood and fire. In fact, she bids Raimondo drink blood, clothe himself in blood, and be transformed and set on fire with blood. <sup>29</sup>

But the seventeen Raimondo epistles are interestingly revealing not only from a spiritual but also from a historical viewpoint. If the subject matter of history is the genetical or natural development of general or particular facts, events, and situations - then, the facts, events, and situations revolving about Raimondo's attainment of Christian knighthood and about the Italian State-Church struggles of the last quarter of the Fourteenth Century, as depicted in Catherine's correspondence with her last spiritual adviser, must be regarded as genuine historical subject matter.

Again, if critically treated history means the apprehension and comprehension of a series of events, as well as their careful diagnosis - <sup>30</sup> then it is the hope of the thesis-writer that the case of Raimondo da Capua has been viewed, weighed, and examined in accordance with the terms of this definition.

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29 P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 129-130.

30 This "definition" is based upon Father Kirsch's article on the meaning of history, in op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 365, as well as upon Prof. F. Harrison's treatment of "gathered knowledge and the gathered conscience of past ages," in his work, The Meaning of History, New York, 1896, pp. 10 et seq.

The Capua problem is singular in nature. Unlike the Pagliarini and Maconi cases, in which one witnesses Catherine's step-by-step guidance of them up the ladder of spiritual perfection, the Capua problem is one of fear versus confidence. The early stage of the problem reveals Capua's reluctance to travel extensively to do oral battle against the transgressions of certain Italian laymen and ecclesiastics. However, he has always been ready to use his pen in praise of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Santa Agnese, and the Church. But to be away from the quiet of his convent for days and days? This would call for some thought and deliberation. It would require, too, a personal battle with a retiredness born of a religious seclusion from the secular world.

Are Raimondo's first attempts to carry out Catherine's epistolary instructions inactivated by stage-fright? Not necessarily so. Is he lacking in courage? Perhaps, though to a minor extent. At any rate, Catherine repeatedly accuses him of fearfulness. Does he finally overcome what she describes as "personal fear"? Yes; but full credit for his defiance of fear must not go to Catherine, although she is able to impose her will upon him, in spite of the fact that, during the six years of their friendship, he is separated from her at least half of that time. It is precisely on account of these long periods of separation that the virgin of Siena must have recourse to letter-writing, in order to help mould Capua into a courageous knight of Christ.

Her letters abound in unconstrained strong-willed formulas such as these: <sup>31</sup>

I will that you lock yourself in the open side of the Son of God.

With desire to see you a true combatant against the wiles and vexations of the devil.

Be strong to slay yourself with the knife of hate and love.

Rest yourself upon the Cross with Christ Crucified.

Make me see and feel you bound and fastened into Christ Sweet Jesus.

Catherine's employment of these epistolic formulaary expressions serve to lend some support to the thesis-writer's theory that her influence on Capua is of the duty awakening, spurring on, and reassuring kind. True, there is a clash of wills between Capua and Catherine. True, too, she does not always come out the victor, especially during the early mental skirmishes. Yet, the preponderance of evidence inclines toward the fact that Raimondo finally succumbs to Catherine's influence.

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<sup>31</sup> P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 118, 127, 134; Vol. III, pp. 221, 226, 266, 294; Vol. IV, pp. 142, 173, 174, 180, 181; Vol. V, pp. 85, 95, 96, 148, 290; Vol. VI, p. 15.

Her influence has been of the active sort - the kind that energizes Capua. Her letters, penetrated with the "Sweet Primal Truth," communicate the essence of good to him. She herself sets the good example. Although she is, as it were, a light, her epistles seem to strike with lightning effect.

But is Capua a weak-headed and weak-kneed individual to succumb to a self-taught maid of thirty years? Not at all. It is to be remembered that Catherine does not appeal principally to Raimondo's emotions. Rather, she appeals to his high-mindedness, to his goodwill. Thus, she writes him: <sup>32</sup>

Out of your goodwill should issue knowledge of the infinite goodness and unspeakable charity of God; and in this knowledge may our soul abide and be nourished. Reflect that through love He keeps your will good.

Indeed, Raimondo yields, for he cannot realize himself fully except through and by the Cross. He knows, too, that God's rational creatures are meant to tend to the perfection of love of the Three Divine Persons, and that this perfection can be attained only along the road traced out by the Sermon on the Mount.

Only that person, reasons he, who is animated by such love

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<sup>32</sup> P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 224.

can promote that knightly spirit which is capable of undoing the individual self-seeking of Italian tyrants and misguided clerics, and the blighting, savage hardness of irreligious "condottieri".

What, then, has been seen in this chapter, is that Raimondo delle Vigne da Capua, who eventually earns the title of "Blessed", is chosen, in 1374, to be Catherine's third and last spiritual director.

At first, suspecting rather strongly the Sienese virgin's brand of mysticism, Capua, a distinguished theologian and author, is finally convinced of her sincerity and nobility of purpose.

She, one day, decides upon a nation-wide campaign to fend off the incursions of sin, in all its shades and varieties. Now begins her series of important epistles to Raimondo, in which she unceasingly exhorts him to become a valiant Christian soldier, a manful knight of Christ.

Capua, who is used to the quietude of his monastery, hesitates at first to enter boldly upon the battlefield. However, he ultimately heeds Catherine's words. Thus, realizing that he must fully accept God's rule in his own heart and help subdue the base passions of those evil-deeds about him, he hastens to do battle for the Lamb of God. Thanks, therefore, to Catherine and to his own goodwill, Capua fights valiantly as a true knight of Christ.

Among his collaborators is Fra Tommaso Cafferini, a very close friend. It is he who continually pesters Catherine's confessor to complete the "Life" of Catherine, upon which he has been working spasmodically because of his many duties as Master General of his Order. The biography is finished in 1395 - that is, fifteen years after Catherine's demise.

As a spreader of the Cult of Catherine, Cafferini occupies a singularly interesting position in the Italian religious circles of the first quarter of the Fifteenth Century. It is on him that the thesis-writer focuses the spotlight in the following chapter, which has been titled, "Tommaso Cafferini: Popularizer of Catherinism."

## CHAPTER VI

### TOMMASO CAFFARINI: POPULARIZER OF CATHARINIANISM

There is sufficient reason to believe that future generations would never have been so well informed of the Siennese virgin, had it not been for the single-hearted devotion of Fra Tommaso di Antonio Macchi Caffarini. It is he who labours fifty years or more for her glory. He writes of her, speaks of her, and preaches about her unceasingly. He searches out every manuscript pertaining to her, copying, correcting and diffusing them with extraordinary zeal and perseverance.

The close spiritual relations between Catherine and Caffarini, the Dominican friar, which begins in 1366, is discernible in a group of ten epistles published by P. Misciattelli.<sup>1</sup> Up until the time the thesis-writer translated these ten Tuscan and Latin letters into English, there had been no complete English renditions.

Probably the most unusual and singularly interesting of the entire group, is the one written by Fra Tommaso to Catherine.<sup>2</sup> So far as the thesis-writer has been able to ascertain, it is the only extant letter dispatched by a distinguished disciple to the Siennese Madonna.

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1 These communications are numbered as follows: I, XXIX, XXX, XXXI, XXXVII, XXXVIII, XLIII, and XLIV, all of which appear in Vol. VI of op. cit.; CXXVII and CXXCV, which are to be found, respectively, in Vols. II and V of op. cit. Of this group of epistles, six are from Caffarini to Pagliaresi; one from Caffarini to Maconi; one from Caffarini to Catherine; and two from Catherine to Caffarini. Although Catherine is believed to have written Fra Tommaso several letters, only two survive. At any rate, this series of ten serves to present a comparatively good picture of the spiritual relations between the Saint and Caffarini.

2 Letter #1, which is incorporated in P. Misciattelli's op. cit., Vol. VI, pp. 45-49.

In this letter, Caffarini makes a humble though learned reply to Catherine's request that he fully interpret Verse 11 of Psalm 130<sup>3</sup> which she has read in Latin. Tommaso says, substantially, that there is a distinct difference between the words "ablactatus" and "adlactatus." The former he interprets as "one who has been weaned from the mother's milk", whereas to the latter he assigns the interpretation, "the believer who absorbs the grace of God as the nursing does the mother's milk."

It is to be regretted that only one message exists of perhaps many transmitted by Fra Tommaso to the virgin of Tuscany. In any event, well would it be to ponder how much scriptural knowledge Catherine does absorb from Caffarini's penned communications; also, the amount of Latin he teaches her. These would, indeed, constitute interesting problems for both the professional Latinist and the experienced biblicist to work upon.

In spite of Catherine's indebtedness to Caffarini for his biblical expositions, she does not hesitate, nevertheless, to communicate to him her kindly spiritual counsels.

Faced with the resurgent problem stemming from domestic and foreign violence, unChristian wickedness, and human suffering,

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3 "If I was not humbly minded, but exalted my soul: As a child that is weaned is towards his mother, so reward in my soul."

Catherine, whose spirit now burns with a peculiar intensity, spurs Gaffarini on to the final phase of her victory over the arch-enemies of "the sweet Bride of Christ"<sup>4</sup> and her millions of spiritual children.

But does Gaffarini show himself "ungrateful", "negligent", and "uncharitable"<sup>5</sup> in confronting the duties which the virgin of Siena outlines for him? If one were to apply the exceedingly high norms of spiritual conduct, one might be inclined to answer somewhat in an affirmative manner. He who would experience perfect charity, Catherine tells him, must expel every ounce of vain love and dread, as well as vain joy and sorrow, out of his heart. His joy should be in God alone. If he must sorrow, then let it be for God alone. Were he to do this, he would not err. On the contrary, he would gain Heaven and Eternal Life.

Again, dilating on the real meaning of consecration to duty, Catherine points out that it is prompted by a true desire to give aid the very moment that it is needed. Thus, it includes benevolence and charity. The former term, she explains, denotes the willingness to help, whereas the latter indicates the helping. She emphasizes the fact that charity is the action, and the willingness to do must have this practical outcome, otherwise it is

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4 P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 226.

5 Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 227-230.

worthless.

The Sienese epistler goes on to say that consecration to duty embraces various forms of service to one's Church and fellow-beings. It is not, therefore, confined to alms-giving and to doing kindnesses to the poor, distressed, weak and sorrowful. It denotes, then, the giving liberally of one's time, labor and interest to a crusade waged against the ceaseless assaults of the demons and their earthly emissaries upon the faith of Christians.

Catherine exhorts Fra Tommaso to act with unselfish interest on behalf of a just cause. She commands him to follow "that supreme eternal Truth",<sup>6</sup> however arduous and solitary might be the path. She advises him to follow the "Light of most holy Faith,"<sup>7</sup> and interpret it as the truth from whence authority comes, rather than interpret mere authority as truth.

Finally, she tells Caffarini that no obstacle, however unsurmountable it may appear to the timid and faint-hearted, can bar

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6 P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 230.

7 M. Tommaso, op. cit., Letter #371.

the way of one possessed with a burning love of "the heart and soul and body of Jesus Christ." <sup>8</sup>

In view of Catherine's fervent appeals and exhortations, one may ask: Is Caffarini ashamed to be identified with a belligerent, free-lance woman reformer who has organized a militant crusade against the rampant evils of her age? Is he, a clergyman, too prudent to be a fellow-traveler of Stefano Maconi, the former lover of vendettas, and Neri Pagliaresi, the erstwhile shiftless and unpredictable verse-maker? Could Caffarini be capable of jealousy because Fra Raimondo da Capua has been asked to succeed his own good friend, Fra Bartolomeo di Domenico, as Catherine's confessor? <sup>9</sup>

Each of these questions must be answered in the negative. Caffarini has always been happy to be identified with any of Catherine's movements. The contents of his Supplemento and Leggenda abbreviata, <sup>10</sup> which are replete with words of praise for Catherine, amply substantiate this fact. He has been nearly equally happy to collaborate with Maconi and Caffarini in any work consecrated to the furthering of Christ's religion, as the

<sup>8</sup> "Il cuore e l'anima e 'l corpo di Gesù Cristo."  
P. Mischiattali, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 228-229.

<sup>9</sup> Fra Bartolomeo di Domenico was Catherine's second confessor. He and Caffarini wrote a little-known treatise on the Dominican Third Order of Penance.

<sup>10</sup> The Leggenda appears in the first volume of the collection of the lives of the Saints known as the Sanctuarium of Boninus Monbriths. Milan, 1479. This work was republished by the monks of Solemes: Sanctuarium seu Vitae Sanctorum, I, Paris, 1910. Cf. R. Fawtier's abbreviated work, "La Légende Mineure de S. Catherine de Sienne", in Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École française de Rome, XXII, fasc. IV-V, 1912, pp. 397-411.

extant correspondence between Caffarini and his two co-disciples so clearly indicates.<sup>11</sup> As for the opinion that Fra Tommaso and Fra Bartolommeo have harbored jealous thoughts on account of Catherine's acceptance of Fra Raimondo as her spiritual adviser - that is wholly untenable. For, although she highly approves of Fra Raimondo, his appointment as spiritual guide has come directly from the General of the Dominican Order, with the confirmation of Pope Gregory XI in a letter issued on August 17, 1376. It appears, too, that Fra Tommaso della Fonte, her first confessor, and Fra Bartolommeo di Domenico, her second confessor, must have been contacted by the General in order to obtain their individual judgments before the Raimondo appointment. In any event, Catherine firmly maintains that the "Blessed Virgin herself stood by her side and gave her Raimondo da Capua for her spiritual father and guide."<sup>12</sup>

Whether or not Catherine's accusations are justified, the fact remains that she charges Caffarini and Fra Bartolommeo di Domenico with pride. One of the more pertinent portions of her epistle

11 P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. VI, pp. 103, 104, 118, 120, 129 and 131.

12 Raimondo da Capua, op. cit., II, xi, pp. 1-3. There is sufficient evidence to support the theory that della Fonte, da Capua, and di Domenico were very good friends, otherwise they would not have collaborated in the history of the reformation of the Dominican rule in Venezia. The history was printed by Flaminio Cornaro, in Vol. VIII of his Eccliesiae Venetae antiquae monumentis illustratae. Venezia, 1749.

on pride and its salutary opposite, humility, follows below: <sup>13</sup>

O proud ones! Behold the Master Who rode upon an ass! Of course, our Redeemer gave one good reason, among others, for coming among us - namely, to reveal to us the obligations of mankind; yes, to face our sins, and to teach us how man can conquer this asinine aspect of our human nature, by getting upon it and taking complete control of it, in much the same manner as you would an ass. Indeed, there is very little difference between us and the beasts of burden, because sin reduces us to their level.

O Ancient Truth, thou which hast shown us the way! I beseech thee to subdue this ass (sin of pride) and to bring forth meekness and humility. But with what help shall we reach thee, Sweetest Love? Yes, with the hatred of negligence and the love of virtue.

Let us say no more, lest I should be prompted to speak of many things at length. That I cannot do now. At any rate, let us follow the examples which I have given you, my dear children and brethren.

In continuing her epistolary discourse on the baseness of evil, Catherine tells her followers, particularly Fra Tommaso, that to be worthy disciples of Christ, we must avoid sin of whatever description, and seek inward peace. And what is inward peace? It is that peace, she explains, which results from a complete subordination of the inferior powers to reason, of reason to faith, and of the whole being to God the Father.

The Siennese epistler goes on to say that this perfect concord

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<sup>13</sup> P. Misciattelli, *op. cit.*, Vol II, pp. 228-229.

between all the faculties, or the complete control of human desires, can be achieved by him who would immerse himself in the Sacred Blood of the Crucified One, who would defend Holy Mother Church, and who would be willing to shed even his own blood for her sake.

Caffarini does not hesitate to follow religiously Catherine's epistolical spiritual advice. He is quick to perceive the fact that "the Lord," to quote his own words, "had resolved to use Catherine as an instrument for the salvation of many erring souls."<sup>14</sup>

Caffarini continues his observations on Catherine's reflections on erring souls in this wise:<sup>15</sup>

Catherine wondered that so many men and women could be so foolish and so blind, that they would follow and love the false and deceitful world, rather than surrender themselves to Jesus Christ, Who calls us and invites us and Who is faithful in all that He promises, even in this world consoling His servants and bestowing joy upon them.

Referring often to the tree full of beautiful fruits, she said that it signifies the eternal incarnate Word, and that the ineffable fruits are all the virtues. On the other hand, the little corn-covered hill, which does not yield good corn, but only husks, is the barren field of the world, which men till with great and fruitless toil. But they who give up trying to get in to the tree (containing fair fruit), as soon as they feel the thorns, are all those who think they cannot endure a God-fearing life, and give it up before they have tried it.

The others, who lose courage when they see how tall the tree is, are those who begin with a good will and a good heart, but who weary after a while and do not persevere in their first resolve. The last kind are those who really believe and who remain steadfast in the truth.

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14 T. Caffarini, Legenda Minor. c. 12.

15 T. Caffarini, Supplementum. I, 1, 6. Cf. Reimondo de Capua, op. cit., I, ix, 3.

Catherine impresses Caffarini so strongly with her saintliness and profound knowledge of human nature, as well as with the belief that no one has ever taught her "what was needed in the path of salvation, but my most beloved Bridegroom Our Lord and Master,"<sup>16</sup> that, not long after her passage into the Beautiful Beyond, he springs into prominence as the most persistent and active promoter of her canonization cause. Indeed, he makes it the dominant motive of his latter life.<sup>17</sup>

It is Caffarini, as has already been seen, who prevails upon Raimondo da Capua to finish his Legenda Major as quickly as possible. As a matter of fact, in order to hasten its completion Caffarini writes parts of it at Fra Raimondo's dictation.<sup>18</sup> At long last, the biography of St. Catherine is finished.

16 T. Caffarini, Legenda Minor, I, ix, 4.

17 It is F. S. Attal, a Twentieth Century authority on the Saint of Siena, who writes that Fra Tommaso "spent his whole life spreading with passionate ardour the knowledge of the labours and glory of the Siennese virgin." L'Angelo della Pace: Santa Caterina da Siena, p. 354.

18 A Latin letter written by Caffarini from Genoa on February 13, 1391, and addressed to Neri Pagliaresi, informs us that, "Although the Master-General [Capua] has been very busy, I have called on him continually and every day, even offering to help him as much as I can, in order that he may complete the Legenda. Because of my insistence, we have already begun to make corrections in the second part - continuing thus in this work, he dictating and I writing." P. Mischiattelli, op. cit., Vol. VI, pp. 118-119.

Inasmuch as the Legenda Major appears in Latin, Fra Tommaso hands it over to Stefano Maconi, asking him to render it into Italian. <sup>19</sup> Maconi, after having received several pressing letters from Caffarini that he push on with the vernacular rendition of the Legenda, finally accedes to his wishes.

In the meantime, the ever busy Tommaso keeps Neri Pagliarosi and other scribes continually occupied, copying and collecting the Siennese saint's epistles. Although Tommaso is busy supervising this great project, as well as the obtainment of written testimonies from those who are familiar with the "virtues with which Heaven had enriched that holy soul [Catherine]", <sup>20</sup> he finds time, too, to produce the already mentioned Supplementum to Raimondo's Legenda.

Johannes Jorgensen, a Twentieth Century scholar who has the joy of examining many original Catherinian documents, and who completes his work on Catherine in Siena, only "two hundred paces from Saint Catherine's home," <sup>21</sup> is prompted to say that "the first place must be given, as a source for the biography of Catherine, not to the Legend of Raymond of Capua, but certainly to the Supplementum of Fra Tommaso Nacci Caffarini." <sup>22</sup> He continues: Although Caffarini calls his work a "Supplement", it is actually a large volume and

19 P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. VI, pp. 129-130.

20 E. Cartier, op. cit., p. 316.

21 J. Jorgensen, op. cit., p. vi.

22 Ibid., p. 407.

"is really the biography with the greatest wealth of original features that we possess of the great Siennese Saint." <sup>23</sup>

A short time after Caffarini has completed the Supplementum and digested well Fra Raimondo's Life of Catherine, he writes an abridgment in Latin of the latter work, with some additions and modifications based upon his own personal knowledge of the Siennese virgin's life and acquaintance with Siennese traditions and customs. This abridgment is known as the Legenda Abbreviata, or Sanctae Catharinae Senensis Legenda Minor. <sup>24</sup>

Not long after the death of the Siennese virgin, Fra Tommaso undertakes a pilgrimage to Palestine. Upon his return to Italy, he goes to Venice, where he lives for forty years. During this time, he acts, successively, as Apostolic Delegate to Sicily and Provincial of the Province of Greece, <sup>25</sup> and still finds time to introduce in Venice and elsewhere the custom of celebrating April 29th as the anniversary of the Siennese epistler's death. On that day certain clergymen are wont to pronounce her eulogy, and her portrait is exhibited and decorated with a profusion of flowers, formed into

23 J. Jorgensen, op. cit., p. 407.

24 Padre Giuseppe Tinagli, O.P., produced a beautiful Italian translation of the Legenda Minor in 1938. The Italian title runs as follows: Vita di S. Caterina da Siena, scritta da Fr. Tommaso Caffarini. Siena: Casa Editrice di Cantagalli.

25 The original Italian runs thus: "Provinciale della provincia di Grecia" e "Legato Apostolice in Sicilia." Vid. Fra Tommaso's letter of 1398 to Maconi in P. Micciattelli, op. cit., Vol. VI, pp. 129-130. Cf. F. Cornaro, op. cit., Tom. VII, pp. 320 et seq.

crosses, bouquets, wreaths and crowns. This appears to be the favorite manner of honoring the memory of the maid who in her life-time has been a lover of flowers.

However, in 1411, objections are made to these celebrations of the anniversary of a person not yet canonized, though it would seem that in that age such proceedings are very commonly permitted.

At any rate, Fra Tommaso and his co-worker, Fra Bartolomeo da Ferrara, are requested to appear before Francesco Bembo, Bishop of Venezia and Legate of the Holy See, to face a serious ecclesiastical charge, to wit: the preaching of the cult of a person who has not been formally recognized as a saint by Holy Mother Church.

Gaffarini quickly begins to collect defensive evidence. His collection of evidence is in the form of at least two dozen testimonies, which are carefully examined by the high ecclesiastics with all possible formality.

Work on this important project is spread out from 1411 to 1416. It is the depositions of the testifiers which form the celebrated "Process of Venice." The result of the ecclesiastical investigation is entirely to exonerate Fra Tommaso and Fra Bartolomeo from all blame in what they have done to honor the memory of Catherine. The testimonies, thus carefully collected, are afterward used in the process of her canonization. <sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> M. De Sanctis Rosmini, "Il Processus", in Studi Catheriniani, Vol. III, 1926, pp. 73-103. Cf. I. Taurisano, "S. Caterina ed il ritorno del papato a Roma", in Memorie Domenicane, Roma, 1929, Tom. XLVI, p. 105.

Gaffarini does not live to witness the realization of his dream - the solemn ceremony in which Pope Pius II determines and decrees that Catherine of Siena be honored as a Saint, in public and private.<sup>27</sup> This takes place in 1461 - twenty-seven years after Gaffarini's death.

Indeed, a labour of love which is begun by Gaffarini in 1380, and which exhibits its first developmental buds in the first quarter, and its final fruits of success in the third quarter, of the succeeding century, more than compensates for those few "uncropped" years during which Catherine calls Fra Tommaso "uncharitable", "negligent", and "ungrateful." But, then, Catherine is hardly one to be tactful when issuing a command which would seem to involve "first things first." With her, therefore, the drive against the vilifiers of Christ and His Church is a matter of primary concern. Yet, it would be unfair to accuse Gaffarini of gross non-cooperation and non-conformity; for, it must be recalled that during the period (1378-1380) that the virgin of Siena seeks to enlist Fra Tommaso's undivided time and efforts, he is busy at Bologna with his special ecclesiastical studies, which he completes in 1382 - two years after her death.

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<sup>27</sup> Pertinent translated excerpts from Pope Pius II's Bull of Canonization are given in Appendix F of this thesis. The complete Italian text will be found in F. S. Attal, op. cit., pp. 357-362. The Latin text appears in M. H. Laurent, Il Processo Castellano, pp. 521-530. Father Laurent's text is based upon a Latin MS, which is preserved in the Archivio Vaticano, Reg. Vat. 483, f. 85-91.

Although Fra Tommaso begins work at Firenze on his master-of-theology degree not long afterwards - perhaps after his return from the Holy Land -, he still finds time to diffuse the extensive spiritual labours of his "Mamma" of Siena. But are his pilgrimage to Palestine and his fifty-odd years spent in spreading Catherinianism pure acts of expiation for not having given Catherine, while still alive, nearly every minute of his time when she requests it? Neither an abrupt, thoughtless "no" nor a sudden, confident "yes" would be wholly justified. In view of Catherine's long-time desire to carry on a campaign against the Infidels of the East, it is quite likely that Caffarini's Mediterranean trip may have been partly motivated by a longing to investigate the possibilities of a crusade. On the other hand, his devotion to Catherine begins long before her death in 1380,<sup>28</sup> and although it requires the disciplining effect of her epistles to steer him back to the path of her thinking, he does not, even for a moment, forsake Catherine or her cause. In fact, his Supplementum and Legenda Minor reveal a devotion to a Saint seldom found in the annals of hagiography. Then, too, the veneration with which he is regarded by his own brethren and the "Circolo Cateriano" is clearly shown by the title of "Blessed" which is reverentially prefixed to his name.<sup>29</sup>

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28 Fra Tommaso Caffarini first meets Catherine in 1366.

29 M.-H. Laurent, "Vita e Opere di Tommaso Caffarini", in Vita di S. Caterina da Siena, 1938, pp. 7-61.

To sum up, it has been seen in the course of this chapter that a member of the Convento of San Domenico, Fra Tommaso Caffarini, who dies in 1434, meets Catherine for the first time in 1366 and, not long after this meeting, is admitted into the "famiglia spirituale."

Learning to appreciate and love Catherine and imbibe her spirit, he soon wins her confidence. However, he likewise receives her epistolical rebuffs because he is not quick to respond to her appeals for full-time aid in checking the rapidly rising wave of evil.

It is clear from the correspondence exchanged between Caffarini and Neri Pagliaresi that, at the time Catherine transmits her epistolary appeals to the former, he is busily engaged in preliminary Dominican studies in Bologna, which he finishes in 1382; whereupon he proceeds to Firenze to begin his master-of-theology courses.

Yet, Catherine's letters to Fra Tommaso make a deep impression upon him. Time and again, he alludes to the fact that one's resolution, as the Siennese saint has repeatedly pointed out to him, should be firm, as it lessens the devil's power of tempting one. The devil, he knows, too, is very much frightened of a determined soul. Of course, Fra Tommaso, by now an experienced theologian, is aware of the fact that a person must not grow careless or over-confident because he knows of this one fear that menaces Satan. He must be resolute and never retreat.

It appears that Fra Tommaso, once started upon a regimen of spiritual betterment, has never retreated, thanks to Providence and Catherine. In fact, he it is who unceasingly works to maintain or restore regular observance in the convents of the Dominican Frairs, and to extend that Third Order which has been rendered so illustrious by the sanctity of the Siennese virgin.

He finds time, too, to help Fra Raimondo finish the Legenda Major, and to produce his own Supplementum and Legenda Minor. Caffarini's literary works, plus his tireless labours to have Catherine inscribed in the catalogue of the Saints in Heaven, offer sufficient evidence to fortify the thesis-writer's claim that the Siennese epistler's influence on him has been great. Conversely, it is safe to say that Catherine is known today to several nations and peoples as a result of the untiring efforts of Capua and Caffarini and their collaborators.

Thus, it is not at all surprising that even here in the Western Hemisphere, five-hundred and seventy-one years after her demise, Catherine's name is in benediction in the Dominican colleges for women at Adrian, Mich., Saint Catherine, Ky., Santa Clara, Cal., Sinsinawa, Wis., Columbus, Ohio, and Caldwell, N. J.

Her portrait is no less inspiring in the houses of the Visiting Sisters of the Sick Poor who do so much good in the less favored areas of New York City. Indeed, the presence of Catherine's statue in the hospitals of Mother Alphonsa Hawthorne Lathrop's Servants of Relief for Incurable Cancer, helps to bolster up the morale of those patients who, suffering from incurable malignant tumors, await death from day to day.

It is, therefore, evident that, while Catherine succeeds in exerting her influence on Caffarini, he, in turn, initiates that movement which finally succeeds in diffusing and perpetuating her influence in various parts of the Catholic World. The impact of Catherine's influence has been so great that, even today, nearly six centuries after her death, her life is the special study and her example the emulation of scores of convents throughout the world.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Throughout the chapters of this thesis, the writer has tried to establish the position that St. Catherine of Siena has shed a pronounced spiritual influence upon her contemporaries.

Having translated into English most of a group of fifty-three Tuscan epistles directed by Catherine to five of her disciples, and twenty-four others - twenty from the Tuscan and four from the Latin languages - which are exchanged between her followers, the writer proceeds to unfold, step by step, the manner in which the Sienese epistlar exerts her religious influence. She first favorably activates the mind, heart and soul of Pagliarosi, Masconi, Flate, Capua and Caffarini, and then, with Divine assistance, successfully goes on to lead them to the ladder of supernatural perfection.

The writer's approach to the solution of the thesis problem has thus been of a two-fold nature. It is his belief that this two-fold plan, namely, of putting into English the hitherto untranslated Catherine letters and those exchanged by her disciples, and of discovering therein her spiritual influence upon her contemporaries, has never before been similarly attempted.

Although Catherine's religious epistles do successfully sway the five representative personalities of her times, each one of them constitutes for her a separate and distinct spiritual case. As introduced in the preceding pages, the facts which rotate about

the five representative spiritual cases that are satisfactorily solved largely by means of Catherine's epistles, are substantially the following:

Catherine teaches Rainieri Pagliarosi, a promising young poet and Dentist, to detach his eyes, mind and heart from the love of visible and finite things of the world and direct his attention to the Realm of the Invisible and the Infinite.

She converts Stefano Masconi from an affluent, vendetta loving, mother spoiled, and lukewarm Christian, to a scrupulous adherent of the discipline of Jesus the Redeemer and Caretaker of our souls, and ultimately leads him into a Carthusian monastery, where he resigns and yields up to the high pleasure of God all love and affection for mundane things.

The Siennese mystic persuades William Flete, a scholarly religious of the Hermit Brothers of St. Augustine, to shake off the yoke of pride and render himself a free and humble Christian by refusing to make himself a judge of others and by loving his brother hermits.

The spiritual "Mamma" of Siena successfully moves Rimondo da Capua, her most illustrious confessor, to a full understanding of his duties to Christ, His Church and His vicar on earth, and also transforms him into a worthy soldier of the Divine Captain of our Salvation, in order that he might fearlessly combat fleshly sin and corruption.

Catherine so impressively points out to Tommaso Cafferini, a Dominican friar, the importance of fervent prayer and perfect union with God, in order to be sustained against worldly temptations, that, after her demise, he devotes his best efforts to the diffusion of the cult and the teaching of the virgin of Siena, and even initiates her beatification.

Those of her contemporaries, then, who receive her epistolary spiritual messages, unmistakably feel her persuasive power and more adequately learn to love the Crucified One. She impresses her contemporaries with her quick understanding of their possibilities. She is thus able to quicken repentance by a positive approach, and not by the latter-day Savonarolan technique of painting lurid word pictures of the consequences of sin, or by the so-called psychoanalytical method of examining into the helpless conscious, which the Twentieth Century Freudian operator claims is not only forced below by the "Id" but also put under pressure from above by the "Super-ego." Catherine's simple but direct way is to fill her contemporary's soul with glowing visions of that holiness which to see is to long for.

In view of the observations which have been made in the course of this thesis, the writer is, therefore, prompted to remark that a revised statement of Catherine's personality and spiritual influence upon her contemporaries may be in order. Whereas conventional biographies of the earthly Catherine tend to picture her almost exclusively as unruffled, unprovocative, and compromising, her epistles show her, instead, to be an

impetuous, almost impatient, and often unyielding personality. In other words, in the Siennese virgin's own letters one sees her, as it were, in the flesh, as an earthly creature of God, with a will actually free from constraint.

True, Catherine's epistles are given credit for changing the lives of her contemporaries. Yet, they act merely as an adjuvant influence. The grace of God, as well as the respective decisions of Catherine's disciples to take full advantage of her spiritual advice, are important factors which play a very essential rôle in converting Flete, Pagliarosi, Gaffarini, Maconi and Capua.

One other deduction may be drawn from a study of Catherine's epistles. It is this; her correspondence with her contemporaries does not bear a one-sided influence. Rather, it produces a reciprocal influence. Perhaps, some day, a group of expert theologians, biblists, littérateurs, and mediaevalists may find it worthwhile to probe into the extent to which her contemporaries teach her Thomistic theology and philosophy, scriptural verse, Dantean poetry, and ambassadorial diplomacy.

Perhaps this group of researchers may or may not concede that Catherine's literary style is reasonably comparable with Aquinas', Dante's and Petrarca's. They may also be able to answer the pertinent question: "May Catherine be called at once a New Devotionist and a Christian Humanist?"

What is, of course, not at all surprising is the fact that her spiritual influence should linger, not only in her own, but in every succeeding, century, making itself felt even today - 571 years after her death.

As a result of this study, the thesis-writer is prompted to stress the belief that Catherine the epistler deserves to be ranked among the few truly great spiritual advisers of mankind who possess that winsome personality and purity of heart and soul, which not only communes with the Heavenly Father, but diffuses Him, as by some natural law of refraction, over the hearts of His earthly creatures.

APPENDIX A

LETTER FROM CATHERINE TO RANIERI PAELLAIUESI <sup>1</sup>

In the Name of Jesus Christ Crucified and of Sweet Mary.

To you, sweetest and dearest brother and my son in Jesus Christ: I, Catherine, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, write you and comfort you in the precious blood of the Son of God - with desire to see you united, transformed and conformed to Jesus Christ. This, my very sweet son, the soul cannot do - that is, to be perfectly conformed to Christ, unless she the soul tears herself altogether from conforming to the world. For the world is at strife with God, and God with the world, and they have nothing whatever in common. And it is really so, because we see that God-made-Man chose as His lot perfect poverty, insults, anguish of the heart, mockery, contempt, hunger, and thirst; despised all human honour and esteem; sought always the honour of His Father and our salvation; persevered to the end with true and perfect patience, and there was no pride in Him but perfect humility.

Oh, esteemed and beloved Charly! Indeed, you are the direct opposite of the world. The world seeks honours and glory, pleasure, pride, impatience, avarice, hate, rancour and self-love, and a man's heart grows so narrow that he has no room either for God or his neighbor.

But how foolish and mistaken are they who conform themselves to this evil world; how are they deceived! They seek honour and find reproach; they seek riches and are poor, for they do not possess the true treasures; they seek pleasure and enjoyment, and they are sad and heavy-hearted because they have not God, who is the highest happiness. They will not hear aught of death and suffering, and they fall straight into the abyss of death; they wish for a secure life and depart from the firm foundation of the Rock.

Now see, dearest son, the difference between Christ and the world. The true servants of God strive with great care not to be in any wise conformed to the world. They detach themselves from hate and worldly comfort, and thus become lovers of that which God loves, haters of that which God hates. They have no other desire but to conform themselves to Christ Crucified, always following His footsteps, completely enveloped in and enamoured of His virtues. They choose that which Christ chose as His lot, and then

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<sup>1</sup> The complete text of this message, in Tuscan, is published as Letter VII by E. D. Thésider, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 33-37.

they find the opposite. They choose poverty and the lowest places, and they are honoured; they have peace and joy and happiness without any sorrow. I do not marvel therest, for they are conformed and transformed to the highest and eternal truth and goodness, which is God, in Whom is all that is good, and in Whom all true and holy desires are fulfilled.

It is, therefore, well, my dear son, to draw out the two-edged sword of love and hate and cut yourself entirely away from this tenebrous life; and it is love of God which will help you do it. I say no more. Remain in the holy sweetness of God. Sweet Jesus. Jesus love.

## APPENDIX B

MACONI'S TESTIMONIAL LETTER TO CATERINE <sup>2</sup>

In the Name of Jesus Christ and of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

To the good and pious Brother Thomas Anthony of Sienna, of the Order of Preaching Friars, residing at the Convent of Saints John and Paul in Venice, Friar Stephen of Sienna, although unworthy Prior of the Monastery of St. Mary of Graces, near Pavia, conveys his good wishes and commends himself and his health to Him Who is the salvation of all men:

Your kind letters, in which you ask me to furnish you with a faithful deposition, in authentic form, regarding the life, virtues and doctrine of the Virgin, Catherine of Sienna, have been received with joy and read with care.

You remind me of my numerous spiritual relations with her during her life-time, and claim my testimony on the occasion of certain complaints which have been made to Francis Bembo, Venetian Bishop of Castello, with regard to the Feast commemorating that holy woman, many persons hesitating to believe in the virtues that are ascribed to her.

You may be interested to know that, in her last moments, she told those of us close to her what we ought to do after her decease. Then, she turned towards me and, pointing me out with her finger, said: 'And thee, in virtue of holy obedience, I command in the name of God to go by all means to the Carthusian Order, for God has called and chosen thee to that.'

As she beheld us in tears on all sides, she said: 'My beloved children, you should not be distressed, but rejoice in the Lord and regard this as a festival day; for I am about to leave my prison, to be united to the Spouse of my soul, and I promise you to be more useful to you after my death, than I could possibly have been during my life.' That promise she has kept, and never ceases to observe it daily.

This is not the time nor place to relate all that Catherine has done and still does for her unworthy son. But I cannot pass over in silence that after God and the most Blessed Virgin Mary, I feel more indebted to the holy virgin Catherine than to any other creature in the world, and if there has ever been any good in me I owe it to her.

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2 The full text of Maconi's testimony on the deeds and virtues of the Siennese saint appears in Latin in M.-E. Laurent, Il Processo Castellano, pp. 357-273.

## APPENDIX C

LETTER FROM CATHERINE KID TO WILLIAM FLAHERTY<sup>3</sup>

In the Name of Jesus Crucified and of Sweet Mary.

To you, dearest son in Christ Sweet Jesus: I, Catherine, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ, write you in His precious Blood - with desire to see you walk in the path of True Light, because without knowledge of this light we shall not attain to the truth; in fact, we shall travel in darkness.

There are two manner of perfect persons who walk in the perfect light. There are those who have set their desire more in mortifying the body than in slaying their own will. These are fed at the table of penance, and are good and perfect; but, if they have not a great humility and do not take consolation in judging according to the will of God and not according to that of men, they often mar their perfection by making themselves judges of those who do not go by the same road as they. And this befalls them because they have set more zeal and desire in mortifying the body than in slaying their own will.

Such as these ever wish to choose times and places and mental consolations in their own way, as also the tribulations from the world and the assaults of the demon; saying, through self-deceit, beguiled by their own will (which is called spiritual self-will): 'I should desire this consolation, and not these assaults or battles with the devil - not for my own sake, but to please God, and possess Him more completely, because I seem to possess Him better in this way than in that.' And thus such a one often falls into pain and weariness, and becomes thereby unbearable to himself; and so mars his perfect state. The taint of pride lies within this, and he perceives it not. For, if he were truly humble and not presumptuous, he would surely see that the first sweet Truth gives state, time, place, consolation, and tribulation, according as it is necessary for our salvation, and to complete in the soul the perfection to which she is chosen. And he would see that it gives everything for love, and, therefore, with love.

The souls that have this perfect light, encouraged and panting with love, run to the table of holy desire. They lose themselves, stripping off the old man, that is, their own sensuality, and they clothe themselves with the new man, Christ Sweet Jesus, following

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<sup>3</sup> The complete Tuscan text of this message is published by P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 137-244.

## APPENDIX G

**His manfully.** These are they who are fed at the table of holy desire, and who have set their solicitude more in slaying their own will than in slaying or in mortifying the body. They have, indeed, mortified the body, but not as their chief aim, but merely as an instrument to aid them in slaying their own will; for their chief aim should be, and is, to slay the will, so that it neither seeks nor will aught save to follow Christ Crucified, seeking the honour and glory of His name and the salvation of souls.

Oh, purified and pacified minds, who are clothed with the sweet garment of the Lamb, His love and charity, and who feed at the table of holy desire because, having attained in great light, you may partake of the holy food - you do not lose time in accepting false judgments, either of the servants of God or of the servants of the world. You do not take offence at any criticism, either against yourselves or others. Your love toward God and your neighbor is well governed and not ungoverned. And because it is governed, such men as these, dearest son, never take offence at those whom they love; for appearances are dead to them, and they have submitted themselves not to be guided by men, but only by the Holy Spirit. See, then, these enjoy in this life the pledge of life eternal.

Would that I could see you and the other unknowing sons reach this light, for I see that this perfection is lacking to you and to others. For, were it not lacking to you, you would not have fallen into such criticism and offence and false judgment, as to say and believe that another man was guided and mastered by the will of the creature and not of the Creator.

I pray you, therefore, by the love of Christ Crucified, that you struggle to win the true and perfect light, so that you may be numbered among the perfect and not among the imperfect. I say no more. Remain in the holy and sweet grace of the Heavenly Father. I commend myself to all of you. Immerse yourselves in the Blood of Christ Crucified. Sweet Jesus, Jesus Love.

## APPENDIX D

BLESSED WILLIAM THE RECLUSE <sup>4</sup>

The Blessed William Flete, variously known to Italian clergymen of his age as, "Guglielmo da Fleta," "Guglielmo da Fleete," "Il Baccelliere Inglese", "Guillelmus de Silva Locus," and "Guillelmus de Anglia," was born in England and prosecuted advanced academic studies at Cambridge University, where he met John Tantucci, who eventually became his good friend.

Some time after receiving his bachelor-of-arts degree, Flete and Tantucci travelled together to Italy, both finally settling down, in circa 1362, among the Augustinian hermits of Lecceto. After 1370, they became acknowledged members of the saint's "family", in which they were usually spoken of by their academic degrees, John being the "Maestro" and William the "Baccelliere."

However, the English recluse was not given to frequent mingling among his co-Catherinists. Spending his days in the Wood of Lecceto, he led a life more austere than the Augustinian rule enjoined upon him. He devoted himself to works of penance and to study, avoided all contact with outsiders, and associated but little with the other friars. He returned to the convent only in the evening or for the offices of the Church.

It is, apparently, this excessive love of solitude, as well as his attaching too much importance to mortification for its own sake, that caused Catherine to admonish him. He, in turn, revered her and induced three others to join her "circle", namely, Antonio da Nizza, Felice de' Tancredi, and Matteo di Fazio de' Cerri.

His devotion to Catherine was so great, that he even revered her clothes. Says Flete, eulogistically: "Not only the person, but the very garments of the holy virgin, gave out a most exquisite perfume; and so did the things that she merely touched; and we who knew her well were sensible of this fragrance which came forth from her clothes, like the sweet odour of a field which the Lord hath blessed."

The Blessed William, lover of solitude and heavenly contemplation, ascended from virtue to virtue, and grew every day more holy. Before his death in circa 1382, he is said to have received divine revelations in his prayers and contemplations, especially about the future calamities of England, on which subject he wrote

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<sup>4</sup> This biographical sketch has been reconstructed by the thesis-writer from the following well-documented sources: P. Misciattelli, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 237-238; C. Milanese (Ed.), Memorie di Ser Cristofano di Colmano Guidini da Siena, pp. 34 et seq.; H.-H. Laurent, Il Processo Castellano, pp. LXVI et seq.; J. Pitts, op. cit., Tom. I, p. 521; and William Flete, Sermo in reverentiam Beatae Catharinae de Senis, Published by R. Fawtier, "Catheriniana", in op. cit., pp. 40-75.

## APPENDIX D

various epistles, replete with varied learning and Christian zeal. These were despatched chiefly to the members of his own Order and Institute.

All of these writings, or at least some of them, were at one time preserved among the Norwich MSS. in the Cambridge Public Library and the Sienese MSS. in Italy. The list given below is still preserved of his works:

1. Predictions to his countrymen of calamities befalling England. One book.
2. To the Doctors of the Province, one Epistle. Cum timore Dei, et reverentia.
3. To the Provincial of his Order in England, one Epistle. Obsecro in Domino Jesu.
4. To the Brethren in general. Ait enim Apostolus, Spectaculum.
5. Divers Epistles. One Book.
6. Of Remedies against Temptations. One book.
7. In honor of Catherine of Siena, One Sermon. Sermo in reverentiam B. Catherinae de Senis.
8. To the Blessed Raimondo da Capua, one Epistle. Ep. ejusdem fr. Gulielmi ad Mag. Raimundum de virtutibus B. Catherinae.
9. A record of Catherine's revelation to him. One book. Narratio fr. Gulielmi de spiritali doctrina oracule vivae vocis B. Catherinae.

## APPENDIX B

BLESSED RAIMONDO THE HISTORIAN <sup>6</sup>

The Blessed Raymond de Capoué presents the most precious qualities that could be united in a historian. He is not a simple and credulous man whose imagination can be easily seduced, but a Religious of profound knowledge and renowned sanctity, who relates to the Church what he saw and heard; and he does it with all the conditions which oblige his testimony to be accepted.

A descendant of the celebrated Pierre des Vignes, Chancellor of Frederick II., he employed eminently better than his ancestor, the activity of his mind and the splendor of his talents. Entering betimes into the Order of St. Dominic, he exercised its most important offices. After directing during four years, the Monastery of Montepulciano, he became Professor of Theology at Sienna, and was the Confessor of St. Catharine, whom he accompanied in her journeys to France and Italy. Urban VI confided to him the most delicate and the most difficult affairs.

In 1380, he was named General Master of his order which he governed during nineteen years. Schism and plague had enfeebled the children of St. Dominic; the Blessed Raymond restored its ancient vigor, and it was under his agency that was developed in the Order of Friar Preachers, that epoch so fruitful in virtues and talent. The Blessed Jean de Dominici, Antoine Neyrot, Constant de Fabriano, Pierre Capusci, Saint Antonino, Fra Angelico, Fra Benedetto, are sons of that reform which he established in the convents of Lombardy, Tuscany, Sicily, Hungary, Germany, Spain and France. He died in the midst of his work, in 1399, at Nuremberg, and his body was transported to Naples - where it now reposes amid the splendors of the church of St. Dominic.

The fatigues of his apostolate did not prevent him from leaving precious writings behind him. Besides the life of St. Agnes of Montepulciano and that of St. Catharine, he translated into Latin the spiritual treatises of her of whom he was at once the Confessor and Disciple. He composed an admirable commentary on the Magnificat, the Office of the Festival of the Visitation, a treatise on reform, and a great number of very remarkable letters.

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6 This brief estimate of Blessed Raimondo's abilities as an observer, recorder and writer, is given by the French Catherine author, Father A. Cartier, in the preface to his rendition of the Italian confessor's Leggende. The French translation, La Vie de S. Catharine de Sienna, Paris, 1853, was wrought into English by the Ladies of the Sacred Heart under the title, Life of Saint Catharine of Sienna, and published by New York's P. J. Kennedy & Sons, n.d. (1860).

## APPENDIX E

All his contemporaries laud his science and his virtues; the Sovereign Pontiffs wished to raise him to the highest dignities of the Church, but his humility opposed it. Urban VI in the briefs which he addresses to him, styles him his head, eyes, and mouth, his feet and hands; he claims for him the veneration of the Emperor, of kings, cardinals and people.

This is the eminent man whom God promises for Confessor to Catharine, as a special favor: he becomes the witness of her life, and the depository of all the secrets of her soul; he writes what he saw, and what he heard; he addresses himself to those who could be capable of contradicting him and carefully discusses the facts which he relates; he confesses his constant hesitations and all the means that he adopts in order not to be deceived. He requests, through the intercession of her whom he fears to be an illusion, an extraordinary contrition for his sins; and when he has obtained that abundance of tears which the spirit of darkness can never bestow he still doubts; then he rests on the countenance of Catharine, the threatening locks of our Lord Himself.

The manner in which he exposes the miraculous abstinence of Catharine, her spirit of prophecy, and her frequent communions, shows that he brings to the examination of the facts all the lights of theology, and all the guarantees of prudence. In fine there is in the recital such a simplicity of language, such an evidence of sincerity, that it seems impossible not to believe in his testimony; God will never allow falsehood thus to assume the garb of truth.

The life of St. Catharine, written by the Blessed Raymond, has been confirmed by all the depositions of his contemporaries; it has served as the basis of the process of canonization, and the Bull of Pius II. recalls its most extraordinary facts.

## APPENDIX F

CANONIZATION BULL OF POPE PIUS II <sup>6</sup>

Pius, Bishop, Servant of the Servants of God: to all the Faithful of Jesus Christ, Health and the Apostolical Benediction.

In every age, there have been men agreeable to God by their sanctity. Though clothed with our common mortality, they have subdued the flesh and have led a virtuous life on this earth. By their merits and intercession the world is preserved, the destroying fire which threatens it is arrested, and God's wrath and vengeance kindled against it are suspended.

We doubt not that, at this very moment, there are some souls who do the will of God, and render the King of Heaven propitious and favorable. Among those who have calmed Almighty God and merited his clemency, the city of Siena, one of the Tuscan glories, reckoned Bernardino [Albizzeschi, who died in 1444 and was canonized in 1450]. <sup>7</sup>

Before Bernardino, our Fathers had seen in the same city of Siena, the virgin Catherine, not less exalted in merit and not less agreeable to God. Her prayers offered to the Divine Majesty have been, are still, and always will be useful to mankind; for if the crimes of the wicked and their blasphemies draw down upon us the wrath of God, the works and supplications of the Saints preserve us from them.

Catherine led an angelic life on earth. She has been in heaven twenty-four years. Unnumbered miracles have manifested her glory, and, yet, the Church Militant has not inscribed her among the faithful Virgins of Christ. The Roman Pontiffs who have preceded us, have not decreed it. Urban VI. and after him Innocent VII. and Gregory XII., who were familiar with her merits, designed rendering her this honor; but they were prevented by schism, troubles and the wars which agitated their pontificates.

God, without doubt, permitted it, because in the midst of those tempests, what was proclaimed in one obedience would have been despised in the other. This affair was consequently deferred until our time, and the Canonization of that Virgin, our countrywoman, has been reserved to us. The sanctity of the virgin of Siena shall be

<sup>6</sup> The Supreme Pontiff's Bull was issued, on June 29, 1461, on the occasion of the canonization of Catherine of Siena. The full text of the Bull, in Latin, appears in M. M. Laurent, Il Processo Castellano, pp. 521-530.

<sup>7</sup> V. Facchinetti, S. Bernardino da Siena, mistico sole del secolo XV, Milano, 1933, pp. 500-501. Vid. also, L. Pastor, Storia dei Papi dalla fine del Medio Evo (Tr. by A. Mercati), Roma, 1910, Tom. 1, pp. 385-389.

proclaimed by a native of Siena, occupying the throne of Peter; and we admit that in this we experience a sensible consolation.

We would, therefore, proceed in these terms to the canonization of the Blessed Catharine:

To the honor of the omnipotent and eternal God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, for the exultation of the Catholic Faith, and the extension of the Christian Religion, and in virtue of the authority of Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, and of that which has been conferred on us, we declare, on the opinion of the Brethren, that Catharine of Siena, virgin of illustrious and ineffaceable memory, whose body reposes at Rome in the Church of the Preaching Friars of the Minerva, has been already received and crowned with glory in the heavenly Jerusalem, amid the choirs of Virgins, in the rank which her virtue merited, aided by divine grace.

We determine and decree that she be honored as a Saint, in public and private, and we ordain that her name be inscribed in the catalogue of the Virgins who are venerated by the Roman Church.

Let no one allow himself to change anything in this declaration, nor in whatever it contains, relates, ordains and settles; let no one attack it with temerity; should anyone thus render himself guilty, let him know that he exposes himself to the indignation of Almighty God, and of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, in the year of the Incarnation, 1461, the twenty-ninth of June, and the third year of our Pontificate.

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Do the letters of the Fourteenth Century saint and epistler, Catherine of Siena, exert a beneficial spiritual effect upon her contemporaries? This is the pivotal question about which revolves the problem of the thesis titled, The Influence of the Spiritual Epistles of St. Catherine of Siena.

A solution of the thesis problem has presented an unusual task, for the following reasons:

i) Although many American and Canadian libraries own at least one or two English-language editions of romantic biographies of Catherine, very little scholarly literature in English is to be found anywhere dealing with the general spiritual influence of the Siennese saint on her own and subsequent ages.

ii) Less than one-fifth of Catherine's letters addressed to her contemporaries have been translated into English.

iii) Only three of a dozen original Tuscan and Latin works written by Catherine's disciples in praise of her spiritual labours appear in English.

iv) It has been necessary to contact Italian, English and American private, public and university libraries, as well as monasteries, convents and publishing houses, in an effort to locate pertinent Tuscan and Latin documents and data.

v) It has also been necessary to turn most of these foreign-tongue documents and data into English.

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Going to the core of the problem has, therefore, necessitated, in the main, a two-pronged assault, namely, the rendering into English of seventy-seven Tuscan and Latin epistles of Catherine and her disciples, and of other foreign-tongue writings - the most important manuscript copies of which repose in the national and municipal libraries of Siena, Florence, Rome and Cambridge - , and the searching therein for real and reasonably tangible elements of the Siennese epistler's spiritual influence on five representative contemporaries: Ranieri Fagliaresi (d. 1406), Stefano Macconi (d. 1434), William Flete (d. circa 1382), Raimondo da Capua (d. 1399), and Tommaso Gaffarini (d. 1434).

In Chapter I is explained the fact that a similar treatment of Catherine's religious influence has never before been attempted in the past, and that a problem involving her epistolary spiritual influence on her contemporaries has never before been both proposed and assayed.

Chapter II centers upon Fagliaresi, a poet and a Dante scholar. It is the sweet goodness of God and the saint's twelve letters which finally raise the poet-scholar's dejected and despairing soul, from a state of imperfect love, to that of perfect love of the Creator.

But how does Catherine help Fagliaresi modify his mode of living? By teaching him to fix his mind, heart and soul upon the Supreme Being. The habituation of this act ultimately helps him free himself from all unworthy acts, thus permitting him to advance from one virtue to another. He becomes an Olivetan monk in fulfillment of Catherine's obedience. Fagliaresi's Vita Capitolo in Rima and Laudes ad Honore are a tribute to her loving personality and an expression of gratitude for the manner in which she changes his way of life.

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The conversion of Maconi, nobleman and writer, is treated in Chapter III. Extravagantly attached to his family, he eventually severs the bonds that hold him fast to his home, disparages self and every mundane form of joy, and bows to the call of the Holy Spirit.

However, it is Catherine's twelve epistles on the school of the Holy Ghost and on active Divine love, which help Maconi appreciate the exuberant life of grace and the richness of supernatural life. She prepares him for the monastic life, but it is the Holy Spirit that guides him into the Carthusian order. The Epistola Domni Stephani is a testimony of Maconi's indebtedness to the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Catherine for their spiritual assistance.

Catherine's series of letters written to Flete, an Augustinian author, are probed into and discussed in Chapter IV. Because Flete has unwittingly been critical of some of his fellow-hermits, he receives enlightening epistolary counsel from Catherine's pen. Its essence is, that knowledge of oneself leads to a wider education - the education of others; and that it is only when one has thoroughly understood the frailties of oneself, that one can afford to be charitable towards others.

Flete humbly accepts the saint's spiritual advice contained in her messages. His appreciation of Catherine's spiritual help is freely admitted in two of his literary works, namely, Sermo in reverentiam B. Catherine de Senis and De virtutibus B. Catherine.

The manner in which Catherine's seventeen epistolary sermons help prepare her last confessor, Capua, for the rôle of effective herald of Christian purity and champion against the rising tide of Godless neo-paganism, is treated at length in Chapter V.

In his Legenda Major, Capua the Dominican clearly indicates his gratitude to the Siennese epistler for her aid in leading him up the ladder of spiritual perfection.

How the virgin of Tuscany favorably impresses Gaffarini with her letters on the true meaning of consecration of duty, is related in Chapter VI.

Although he is a Dominican writer and a master of theology, he is always humble and obedient. He it is who, after 1380, initiates the movement that culminates in Catherine's canonization. Gaffarini's half-century devotion to Catherine and his hagiographic studies, Supplementum and Legenda Minor, amply testify to the saint's spiritual influence on him.

There are at least four major conclusions and recommendations which may be made as a result of this study of Catherine's spiritual letters. They may be given in this order:

i) Catherine knows that she is not an expert theologian. Therefore, she dares not deal with delicate theological questions. Here is but a simple teaching, which is grounded in love of God and her fellow-beings.

ii) Due credit must be given to Catherine's epistles for bringing about beneficial spiritual changes in the lives of her contemporaries. Yet, the fact remains that the light of grace plays the key rôle in their spiritual transformation.

iii) Catherine's writings might be profitably examined by scholars, some day, for the extent to which her contemporaries exert their influence on the saint of Siena.

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

iv) The Catherine of conventional biographies, which quite often contain a mixture of fact and fiction, cannot be reconciled with the Catherine of her letters, in which her human side is more clearly reflected. Indeed, her own epistles, though simple and candid, may be looked upon as the most trustworthy materials from which a true-to-life word portrait of Catherine may be constructed.

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