

God: 'For all its questioning, this book is written out of a deep and positive faith in God, to whom I cannot say no, a faith which I have to acknowledge originated through the Jesus about whom I ask so many questions'.

What kind of faith does he still have in Jesus? The question is difficult to answer. Commenting on the words of Jesus in the Gospel attributed to St John: 'I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but by me', he expresses doubts about the statement that Jesus is the truth, or 'the criterion of the truth, the truth of how things are' (p. 16).

These doubts about one statement of Scripture are linked with more general doubts about the meaning and value of all the texts of the Gospels. Chapter III puts the question: 'What can we really know about Jesus?' We have the answer in the first lines: 'There is a good deal that we probably do know about Jesus; the trouble is that we can rarely, if ever, be sure precisely what it is'.

Do we have perhaps something more certain in the statements of the Church?

The Chalcedonian Definition, 'a classic statement of the doctrine of the Incarnation', 'is the foundation stone of the whole theological system of the Christian church'. But its authoritative status may not be admitted: 'We can look at the doctrinal statements of Christianity as human constructions, negotiated by fallible human beings against the background of the culture of their time as a result of particular developments (which could have been otherwise) and on the basis of particular presuppositions (which are open to critical examination)' (p. 74). The way is very open to 'The Myth of God Incarnate' (p. 88).

Every chapter brings a lot of questions and new doubts. The author steadily refers to other authors, with quotations which are often superficial. He does not study the matters he is treating; he tells us what others say; he quotes sentences like: 'O Christianity, Christianity, why do you not answer our difficulties?' (p. 105).

I am afraid a discussion would be useless. But there are perhaps other unanswered questions. Why such a book, with only questions, without any attempt to answer? Why does the author everywhere choose a sceptical position? On the question of Christ's sexuality, why does he quote Canon Hugh Montifiore on a possible 'homosexual explanation', and the novel of Kazantzakis on a marriage between Jesus and Mary Magdalen (p. 95)? Why does he collect so many strange opinions, without a critical evaluation?

Those who seriously want to reach the truth will find the book disappointing.

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CATHERINE OF SIENA'S WAY by Mary Ann Fatula OP, *Darton Longman and Todd, 1987. P. 219, £5.95 p.b.*

This book, which is one of the useful *Way of the Christian Mystics* series being published by DLT under the general editorship of Noel Dermot O'Donoghue, offers an introduction to Catherine of Siena as 'friend, sister and guide in the journey of mysticism' (p. 14). After a brief general

introduction, the author (who is Associate Professor of Theology at Ohio Dominican College, USA) proceeds to set *Catherine in Context* (the title of Chapter One), after which she devotes the ensuing nine chapters to a detailed exposition of Catherine's teaching, which she illustrates by means of a wide selection of often quite lengthy quotations from all Catherine's writings (it is nice to see the Prayers in particular plumbed so frequently), as well as from other early sources, especially the invaluable 'Life' by her close friend and confessor, Raymond of Capua. The author's approach is to expound different aspects of Catherine's thought and teaching in each chapter, the order in which the various themes are studied seeming to suggest a kind of progression: 'Embracing the Will of God' (ch. 2); 'Clothed in the Truth' (ch. 3); 'The Inner Dwelling' (ch. 4); 'Our Mother Prayer' (ch. 5); 'The Blood of Jesus: Mercy for the Human Heart' (ch. 6); 'The Two Wings of Love' (ch. 7); 'Trusting in the Providence of God' (ch. 8); 'Trinity, Abyss of Love' (ch. 9); 'Zeal for your House Consumes Me' (ch. 10).

It is probably true to say that St Catherine of Siena is not the most 'popular' of saints and her teaching is fairly demanding, whether studied in the original or in translation. This clear exposition of it, lit up as it is by occasional flashes of real insight, will be welcomed by many of those who are attracted to St Catherine but are daunted by the considerable mental effort required to do more than skim through her writings more or less superficially. The author has, in my view, succeeded in making the *Dialogue*, in particular, more accessible by her 'pinpointing' technique whereby she brings together similar thoughts from different parts of the *Dialogue* itself and parallel passages from the *Letters* and *Prayers*. Every now and then she throws new light on what one thought one already knew, e.g. her comment on p. 21 to the effect that the apparent cruelty of her mother in making her do all the household chores single-handed was really no more than an attempt to 'face her with the unenviable lot in store for any woman who refused to head a household of her own'.

There is a useful and fairly detailed 'Outline Chronology of Catherine's life' in Appendix I and a comprehensive list of 'Significant Texts Editions and Translations of Catherine's Writings' in Appendix II. There is also an Index. This would have been more useful if it had been based on family or surnames rather than Christian names, as it appears to be in many cases. Thus, for example, Bartolomeo Dominici and Bartolomeo Prignano are both to be found under B (with no cross-reference in the latter case to 'Urban VI') while Stefano Maconi is listed under S. As far as I can see, Catherine's own family name appears only once, under G (Giacomo Benincasa). It took me some time to find her mother, who is listed under L (Lapa Piacenti)! Very odd, and rather a pity, as the book warrants a good index. Otherwise, it is well produced and solidly enough bound for a paperback, with no glaring printing errors. The price seems very reasonable.

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