

people actually talked of 'visiting Peter' when they meant 'going to Rome'. But in a world without mass media, even the mass media available to and used by the classical emperors (I mean the coins particularly) I do not think that "sedulously advanced" has much force here. There was fertile soil already there for the cult of Peter in the sentiments and needs of the sort of people who visited Peter. I do not think this was a matter of peasants but of the feelings and requirements of the Germanic warrior aristocracy, whom Dr Richards, like a good Byzantinist, regards with distaste, unlike Gregory the Great who didn't like them much but knew they had to be lived with. Dr Richards is not very good, because he is not in this matter learned enough, on St Benedict. He tells us the monastic vocation "was specifically non-priestly and monks were not permitted to celebrate Mass". On p 156 he tells us correctly that "in many monasteries monks were ordained to say Mass". He himself points out how Gregory relied on monks, particularly from his own monastery, as candidates for the episcopate. By contemporary standards, he promoted more bishops than popes were wont to and he brought a monastic element into the hierarchy for the first time. When one realises that for most, especially conservative Roman clergy, monks were a collection of hippies, it is not difficult to see why Gregory was so unpopular in Rome by the time

of his death (though Dr Richards does give an admirable account of the anti-Gregorian reaction without fully understanding it).

Dr Richards gives a good account of the misunderstandings between Rome and Constantinople over the title ecumenical patriarch and clears up the constitutional implications. He misses one quite important point I thought. Gregory certainly claimed a position superior to any living bishop and Dr Richards is very good on just what this entailed. But he certainly did not want to call himself universal bishop and repudiated the title with horror (unlike Gregory VII). I do not think he was making a tactical ploy. He accused the Patriarch of seeking a "solitary pre-eminence". What I think is at issue is his view of the Church. By 'Church' in Gregory's day was meant the community of the faithful, especially the faithful departed. The pope himself was then in this perspective merely one of a succession of bishops of Rome however great the authority or prestige of the see. So was the patriarch in the Church of Constantinople and this is what Gregory was reminding John IV of. In conclusion it needs pointing out that this is the first book on Gregory in English for seventy years and the most serious since Dudden was published in 1905. For all its faults, and they are more than there ought to be, this is a stimulating book that deserves to be read.

ERIC JOHN

**I, CATHERINE: Selected Writings of Catherine of Siena, edited and translated by Kenelm Foster and Mary John Ronayne. Collins, 1980 £7.95**

If 1980, which marks the sixth century of the death of Catherine of Siena, had passed without the publication, in English translation, of any of her works, English-speaking admirers of the saint (and they are many) would not only have been disappointed, but would also have experienced a certain frustration of their efforts to appreciate better – and at closer quarters – this remarkable Italian woman and her message. Fortunately, however, this is not the case, for, with the publication, ear-

ly this year, of a translation of *The Dialogue* (based on the Italian critical edition), and more recently, of *I, Catherine*, a translation of selected writings, the opportunity to convert distant admiration into genuine appreciation, and even familiarity, has been offered.

*I, Catherine* is well-titled, for the book is mainly a selection from the letters of Catherine of Siena ("I Catherine . . . write to you" is her stylized salutation); what is possibly misleading is the sub-title, "Sel-

ected Writings of Catherine of Siena”, for Catherine’s writings are of three types – her Letters, the Dialogue and her Prayers – and as none of her Prayers, and only a short (and almost continuous) extract from the Dialogue, is included in these “selected writings”, the sub-title could create expectations which are not fulfilled. This omission, however, is not in itself upsetting, for what we most need is a translation of Catherine of Siena’s letters.

The book contains 60 of these letters, arranged chronologically, and divided into four groups:

- 1 Early letters, 1374(?) - 1376;
- 2 Letters written between June and September, 1376;
- 3 Those written between January 1377 and December 1378;
- 4 Her last letters of 1379 and 1380.

To these letters is added an extract from the Dialogue, consisting of the Prologue (chaps. 1 and 2) and chaps. 13-25, which represents the oldest section of the book: this is the part which corresponds most closely to Catherine’s original thinking on her projected work, as outlined by her in a letter to Raymond of Capua. This extract can, therefore, be said to contain the whole of the Dialogue in capsule, and to touch on most of its major themes. It is, consequently, a happy choice. Preceding the selection of letters is an Introduction by Kenelm Foster. This is excellent in its balanced and comprehensive presentation of Catherine of Siena’s life and spiritual teaching; in fact, it is one of the best short introductions to Catherine available. It not only sets the scene for what follows in the letters when Catherine speaks for herself, but it also greatly facilitates our understanding of her thought.

Catherine of Siena, one of the greatest Italian letter-writers of the 14th century, has left behind her almost 400 letters. The 60 chosen for this present anthology are a good cross-section of these letters: they cover all her main themes; are addressed to a great variety of correspondents; belong to the different periods of her life; and illustrate various sides of her rich personality. Kenelm Foster’s Introduction suggests

that the chief importance of Catherine’s letters lies in their spiritual and doctrinal message, a message which is one with the central message of the Christian faith, namely, that in Jesus Christ God has supremely revealed his infinite love for the human race. A reading of the selection of letters in *I, Catherine* bears this out: in them, we see how the Christian message springs to life through the medium of Catherine’s forceful, enthusiastic, loving personality. It is presented in many and different ways, for, in her letters, Catherine meets each of her correspondents where he or she actually is on the path of salvation, with his or her particular temperament, problems, and strong and weak points. One instance of her different approach to different people is found by comparing letter 15, addressed to the timid, vacillating Pope, Gregory XI, with letter 41, addressed to the impatient, overbearing Pope, Urban VI: in the former, aware of Gregory’s peace-at-any-cost attitude, she encourages him to have the courage of his convictions, reminding him that “if a wound needs to be cauterized and the badness cut out of it, yet nothing but ointment is put on, not only will it not heal but it will fester so completely that in many cases, death will be the result;” in the latter, in an effort to dissuade Urban from “cauterizing” unnecessarily, she urges him to temper justice with compassion, by “bearing patiently” with the faults of one of his “foolish” sons. In all her letters, Catherine emerges as a vibrant, warmly-caring person, both gentle and strong, in love with the actual person to whom she is proclaiming it. Yet, in reading these letters, one is not inclined to stop at Catherine; for, always she is there, as a precursor, beckoning beyond herself to the God of love.

That Catherine’s vigorous spirit and hopeful message comes through in a captivating manner in *I, Catherine* is, of course, due, in a large measure, to the expert translation and editing of Kenelm Foster and Mary John Ronayne. The translation, both accurate and graceful, is very readable; the notes, at the end of each let-

ter, are short, helpful and informative. Here and there, sections of a letter are omitted, but, this omission is always noted on the spot, and a resume of its thought is provided in parentheses. To translate Catherine of Siena intelligibly is no mean feat! She uses much vivid imagery, but often almost as if her words and images cannot keep up with her desire to make God known and loved, one image is abandoned in mid-course in favour of another. Also, she sometimes sets out with a definite concept which she proceeds to develop philosophically, but before coming to a logical conclusion, the philosophical process is abandoned and a theological truth (the one which she had in mind from the beginning!) is arrived at. To handle all this in translation is not easy: that the two translators have done it so well speaks both of their expert knowledge of the Italian language and of their sympathetic understanding of Catherine's spiritual thought.

*I, Catherine* is a book which both those who know little about Catherine of Siena and her spirituality, and those who are better acquainted with her, will appreciate. For those, however, who would like to use it as a study resource, there are some difficulties. These concern the enumeration of the letters: to date, we have three sets of numbering – that of Gigli;

that of Tommaseo; and (for 88 letters) that of Dupré Theseider. Now we have a fourth set, that of Foster-Ronayne. This complicates reference to the letters, in English. Also, in connection with the enumeration, a table of cross-references (indicating the number of the relevant letter in the various systems of enumeration) would be helpful. As it is, a student who knows the Gigli or Tommaseo or Dupré Theseider number of a given letter has no way of verifying whether it is included in the present selection except by paging through the book and consulting the information given at the beginning of each letter. These few difficulties, however, concern only the person who wishes to use *I, Catherine* as a reference work; in other respects, it is a pleasing and relevant presentation offering a refreshing message of hope to the men and women of today. Its value is enhanced by the fact that it is the only collection of its kind in English.

The collaboration of two people belonging to the Dominican Order in this work – Kenelm Foster, a preaching friar, and Sister Mary John, a cloistered nun – is a reflection of Catherine's ability to bring together in her 'family', persons from different spheres of life; and also, a happy testimony to the reality of the 'Dominican family' today.

MARY O'DISCROLL O P

**THE WORLD OF MEDIAEVAL LEARNING** by Anders Piltz, trans by David Jones.  
*Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1981. £15.00*

Dr Piltz has written a general introduction to 'the world of mediaeval learning' for 'anyone who takes pleasure in confronting his own intellectual habits, his ways of thinking and his attitudes, with those of cultures which are remote from his own in time and space'. He addresses himself to the non-specialist, in a book illustrated with late mediaeval woodcuts, with 'place-finders' in the margins like those devised in the late twelfth century for dictionaries of theological terms. The woodcuts are accompanied by explanatory glosses, but although they illustrate many

aspects of the study of the *artes* their uniformly late date is unfortunate in a book which begins with Roman times. No use has been made of the abundance of illustrative material available for the earlier Middle Ages.

In a popular treatment such as this some simplification is unavoidable; but there is no excuse for perpetuating outdated views. Dr Piltz has been guilty of putting forward without comment a number of statements which are now untenable, or highly controversial. He speaks of