

Promethean attempt to control how things make sense, born of 'terror or self-importance (the twin faces of egotism)' (p. 225). Yet in his own account God's presence in the world as 'spirit' is 'why we exist at all' (p. 276), and 'it is our awareness of incomprehensible mystery which constitutes the permanent possibility of our (indefinitely extendable) comprehension of contingent particulars' (p. 236). Is that so different from the quest for explanation that the latter can be dismissed in such pejorative terms? I am in basic sympathy with much (though not all) of that for which Lash is arguing. But for this reader at least (and, as Lash himself says, 'for whom else can I speak?' (p. 23) ), there are aspects of the style of argumentation that are distinctly counter-productive.

MAURICE WILES

**ICONOGRAFIA DI SANTA CATERINA DA SIENA, I : L'IMMAGINE** by Lidia Bianchi & Diega Giunta. *Città Nuova*, Rome, 1988. pp. 606. 140000 lire.

'A picture does not always *live* for me while I am seeing it', is one of those Wittgensteinian remarks that linger and tease the mind towards understanding.

The remark may prove illuminating when delving into this monumental survey of some 1200 works of art showing St Catherine of Siena, dating from the 14th century to virtually the present day. Most of the items are listed individually, many with corresponding illustrations, and there is an ample bibliography. So abundant was the material collected, from Peru to Sweden, that two further volumes are planned, this one focussed on images of the *person* of Catherine, rather than, say, episodes from her life. Over 600 works of art are explained individually at some length by a team of named writers, rigorously concentrating on dating, style, attribution and so forth. The opening essay by Bianchi is a much-needed, detailed study of the saint's tomb in Rome.

Even simply as an extensive catalogue, the book would be indispensable; in addition it has a valuable historical and theological interpretation of the material by Giunta (pp. 63–151). Manuscript and printed material apart, not many works seem to survive from before Catherine's canonization in 1461, although there is still in Siena the delicately devotional fresco by Vanni, who knew the saint personally. It would appear that the early artistic representations of events in the life of Catherine followed reliable sources closely, and that the signs and symbols express the inner realities and states, the mystical phenomena and spiritual ascesis, the choices and renunciations, actually to be found in this extraordinary woman, who became a lay Dominican.

The 16th-century painting now at Blackfriars, Oxford—portraying stigmata, heart, halo, devil, triple crown, crucifix, Latin verse by Pius II—indicates how much unpacking some art requires. This proliferation corresponds to the imaginative fertility of Catherine's own thought. (Incidentally, where was this painting for centuries and where is its lower section now?). Giunta provides background and information, whether to explain why the saint is holding a red and a white rose, or to outline the long disputes between Dominicans and Franciscans over Christ's own blood and

over the saint's stigmata. One (Franciscan) Pope forbade representations of Catherine's stigmata on pain of excommunication. Blood was, of course, a dominant feature in her life and thought.

Repeatedly Catherine is portrayed with a book and a crucifix, to be interpreted variously. In letters she spoke of Christ climbing on to the teaching chair, *cattedra*, of the Cross, and of the Word being written on the wood of the Cross not with ink but in blood. She who had been schooled so profoundly, *non solum discens sed et patiens divina* as Aquinas would have said, could aptly be described as *doctrix* over a fresco, where she gazes at Christ very much 'the man of sorrows'. Catherine had not only become wise but was in her lifetime, and has been ever since, a teacher and a guide. Declared a doctor of the Church only in 1970, art had long witnessed to the doctrinal dimension of her sanctity. There are striking 18th-century images of her wearing a doctor's cap.

There is much to assimilate, although it is not always easy to find one's way through all the material. A fully comprehensive index of places would have helped, and manuscript illustrations could have been described more extensively. Yet this is a superb collective achievement, truly a milestone, open to correction but unlikely to be superseded as a whole.

In the end, the scholarship is there to help make the images intelligible and to release their power. There are sophisticated works and popular art, public statues and images for more secluded viewing. Line, colour and volume bring to us the depths of Catherine's astonishing experiences. Different epochs and people have responded to diverse aspects of her manifold personality and public activities, leading to variety in styles of representation and choice of signs and symbols. The chart tracing chronologically the use of nearly 40 attributes will need further testing but is intriguing. Thus, on the evidence provided, why should the devil (to be found with the saint on a 16th-century seal of the Edinburgh Dominican nuns, for example) disappear from images of Catherine for about 300 years, to reappear this century? The future may bring more emphasis on her as a woman in the Church or as a peacemaker. 'You need to think of the role which pictures ... have in our lives'. Wittgenstein comes to mind again in considering a painting that implores protection for Perugia during an epidemic, or the Seitz mosaic of Catherine holding reverently the papal tiara in the funerary chapel of Pius IX, or Maragliano's baroque statue festooned with rosaries and surrounded by flowers and candles.

Art can make-believe that helps make you believe.

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**GOD IN SOUTH AFRICA** by Albert Nolan OP, *CIR*, London 1988, pp. 241. £6.95

Our shelves are filled with books which draw our attention to theology's need of a socio-analytical mediation, arguing in defence of the hermeneutics of liberation and erecting sophisticated variations on the theme of hermeneutical circle, where the terms are theology and liberation struggle, or the Poor and the Word. And much of this writing is important and well-argued, but somehow, somewhere between the *barrio* and the bookshop, the voice of the originators of liberation theology, the base communities and

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