

ive continuity between originally intended meaning and present meaning, if the New Testament is properly to be regarded as the fulfilment of the Old. And while I recognize the attractiveness of his theoretical model with his talk of 'frames', 'screens' and 'horizons', I am not sure how it helps us resolve various crucial hermeneutical questions: e.g. is an interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in terms solely of 'the rise of Easter faith' excluded by a historical critical analysis of the texts or does it lie within the bounds of legitimate

present meaning? And does the world's 'horizon of meaningfulness' exclude a concept of miracle or of the devil? It would be unfair to press these points. It is only Dr Hughes' willingness to attempt to relate his exegetical findings to much wider theological issues which leaves him vulnerable to such criticism. The attempt to show Hebrews' continued relevance in this whole area is much more valuable than the loose ends such a necessarily brief attempt can hardly avoid leaving.

JAMES D G DUNN

THE DIALOGUE: CATHERINE OF SIENA. Translated and introduced by Suzanne Noffke O P with a Preface by Giuliana Cavallini. *SPCK (Classics of Western Spirituality series)*, London, 1980. pp 398. £7.50.

It is appropriate that the sixth century of the death of St Catherine of Siena (1349-1380) should be marked by the publication of a new English translation of her one book, 'my book' as she called it. Such a translation has long been needed. For one thing, of the only two previous attempts to present this compendium of Catherine's teaching to English-speaking readers, the first dates back to the early fifteenth century and is not now readily comprehensible to most people (Text reprinted in the Early English Texts series, OUP, 1966), while the second, besides being Victorian in tone, is available now only in a somewhat abridged form (paperback reprint of shortened version of Algar Thorold's translation of *The Dialogue* (1896) distributed by Augustine Publishing Company, Devon). Moreover, all previous translations were in effect rendered obsolete by the publication in 1968 of a splendid new Italian edition of *The Dialogue (Il Dialogo della Divina Provvidenza, a cura di Giuliana Cavallini, Edizione Catheriniane, Roma, 1968)*. Though not a critical edition in the strict sense, the text of this edition is based on one of the earliest and most reliable extant manuscripts of Catherine's 'book' and includes a critical apparatus covering the main variants. More importantly, however, the editor has divided the text in a way that almost certainly corresponds to the book's original structure, which seems to have been one

of petition, divine response and thanksgiving, of 'dialogue', in fact, between the soul of Catherine and the person of God the Father. In her preface to the present translation, Cavallini explains how the puzzling earlier division of the book into so-called treatises and chapters came about, and describes how she came to discover the key to its true structure.

A strong recommendation for this new translation is, then, the fact that it is based on the text as edited by Cavallini. But even with the best of texts, the task of translating Catherine's vigorous and at times idiosyncratic use of her lovely fourteenth century Italian remains a formidable one. One does not have to read very far to discover that her logic 'follows a relentless pattern of "layering" in which she restates her arguments frequently, but almost always with the addition and integration of new elements' to such an extent that 'even seemingly incompatible metaphors become inextricably joined'. (Introduction, p 15). Moreover, the very concept of an extended 'question and answer' dialogue between God and a human soul is so strange that one wants to ask how Catherine came to conceive her book in that form. Dr Noffke does not discuss this question directly, but she surely adumbrates part of the answer when she quotes from a seminal paper on the composition of *The Dialogue* in which the late Professor Dupré Thesider showed that, for Catherine,

what she 'heard' in her encounters with God was not her own to tamper with. She clearly felt free to rephrase or adapt stories or incidents she had heard in other contexts (even some gospel narratives were occasionally given daringly original applications) but whenever she lifted the 'words of God' from her own first recounting of them, she left them virtually unchanged. By pinpointing this reverence of Catherine's, her sense of awe, almost, in respect of her own mystical experiences, Dr Noffke has surely drawn attention to an inviting and promising field of study.

The fine Introduction, which is both comprehensive and scholarly, is fully matched by the excellent footnotes throughout the book, which throw much light on the meaning of the text as well as on the social and historical context in which it was written. Unfortunately, the translation itself does not quite meet the same standard. There are passages of great complexity that have been translated well, at times very well, with an occasional flash of real genius when a memorable Catherinian phrase is rendered in equally memorable English. The text, as a whole, reads smoothly enough, though the choice of vocabulary seems at times rather ornate and archaic. But there are a great many inaccuracies and inconsistencies, combined with a certain 'smudginess' of syntax and expression. On p 234, for instance, the word *fibbiale* has been translated as 'jewel', thereby missing Catherine's contrast between the 'pearl of justice' glistening in the fastening of the cloak worn by 'the chosen ones' and the dull metal clasp (*fibbiale*) of injustice used by 'puny wretches' to hold their cloak together. Then, on p 52, Christ's blood is said to be 'steeped and kneaded with his divinity into the one bread which the heat of [God's] love held nailed to the cross', which is odd for two reasons. To begin with, it is not easy to see how blood could be steeped in anything. The word Catherine used, *intriso*, certainly can mean 'steeped', but here, surely, no more than 'blended into' or 'mixed with'. Furthermore, the 'which' suggests that it is the bread that is nailed to the cross, whereas Catherine's reference is unambiguously to Christ himself. Again, on p 241, certain

sinners are said to become 'the devil's arms, and ... throw their venomous filth within and without', thus evoking an image of a group of ruffians throwing mud and stones. Catherine here used the word *arme*, which does indeed mean 'arms', but in the sense of weapons, not limbs, while the filth that is being 'thrown around' is quite simply the stench (*le puzze loro*) with which the sinners in question poison (*avvelenano*) the atmosphere. And Catherine's lovely image of the whole wide world nestling in the hollow of God's hand is obscured, even destroyed, by translating *pugno* literally as 'closed fist' (p 560. Above all, to render the phrase *Io so Colui che so'* throughout by 'I am who I am', rather than 'I am He (or the One) who is', especially when it occurs in conjunction with its antithesis '*e tu sei colei che non e'*' (and you are she who is not) is, to say the least, to becloud the centrality of this concept and revelation in Catherine's thinking and teaching.

The sad thing is that these and many other similar examples could almost certainly have been avoided had the translator not attempted to accomplish a task such as this within the space of a year (Preface, p xv). This is far too short a time for the painstaking process of revision and re-revision, of third, fourth and fifth thoughts that a text like the *Dialogue* calls for. Nevertheless, even as it stands this translation – which one cannot but welcome despite its shortcomings – makes it clear that given time, a good deal of time, Dr Noffke has the ability to produce the first-class English version of the *Dialogue* that is still awaited. For this reason, she should be encouraged to start work soon on a fully revised second edition, and in the hope that she will do so, I venture to make two suggestions:

- a) that she arrange for her manuscript to be read at some stage by someone with a specialized knowledge of medieval Italian, capable of enlightening her as to the many nuances of meaning that make the translating of a seemingly straightforward text like *The Dialogue* such a tricky business;
- b) that she abandon the attempt to read 20th century 'sexist' ideas back into the 14th century and settle for translating the

text as it stands. Her efforts to avoid using the word 'man' in almost any context, above all in the phrase 'God and man' when used of Christ as man and in reference to the Eucharist, involves her in much awkwardness and ambiguity of phrasing and some rather odd theology. For Catherine a man was a man and a woman a woman. To each God had said: 'I make you free, subject only to myself' (Tommaso 69), and to each Catherine longed to give something of the utter freedom in re-

gard to all men (and, of course, women!) that was hers precisely because she was herself 'servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ'.

The book is quite fat and difficult to keep open, but it is beautifully set with only a handful of minor misprints; the prettied-up (and unidentified) version of Andrea Vanni's 'true image' of St Catherine on the cover is quite dreadful.

MARY JOHN RONAYNE O P

FAITH IN HISTORY AND SOCIETY: Towards a practical fundamental theology by Johann Baptist Metz. *Burns & Oates*, London, 1980. pp 237 £6.50.

JENSEITS BÜRGERLICHER RELIGION: Reden Über die Zukunft des Christentums by Johann Baptist Metz. *Kaiser – Grünewald*, 1980. pp 148 DM 13, 50.

Paul Ricoeur's Sarum Lectures in Oxford last year concluded with unstinted praise for Metz's recent work. On the other hand, in the Hulsean Lectures which Charles Davis gave in Cambridge in 1978 a much more restrained and even somewhat sour assessment emerges. *Faith in History and Society*, to my mind, consolidates the author's claim to have established a radically new approach in Catholic theology. Whether that judgment will be confirmed by many English readers is another matter: the translation (by David Smith) is so fuzzy and wayward that few will persevere to the end.

We cannot do without a rational Christian apologetics (chapter 1). The response to the rise of the bourgeoisie after 1789 (the word "Bürger" appears on every other page but is systematically translated "middle-class citizen" or "citizen" *tout court*), with their emphasis on the individual and on freedom, was the ultramontane and neo-scholastic ghetto, with its consecration of the absolutist theory of sovereignty in 1870 and its fear of "subjectivism" (chapter 2). The defeat of that form of Catholicism at Vatican II has left us with a very "liberal" and "privatised" bourgeois religion (chapter 3). The available theologies, from Karl Rahner's transcendental anthropology to Moltmann's speculative gnosticism and Pannenberg's

universal history, are irretrievably *idealist*. The only way beyond this is to insist on the primacy of *praxis* – which, for Christians, means the primacy of following Jesus as disciples: "The Christian idea of God is intrinsically practical – God cannot be thought of at all unless the thought irritates and encroaches on the immediate interests of the one having the thought" (chapter 4). Far from being something extra, or an incubus that burdens mankind, biblical religion is precisely what historically constitutes free persons (p 61). The function of the Church is to act as the public *memoria passionis Jesu Christi* (chapter 5). To keep alive memories of the suffering of the derelicts and the oppressed is to constitute a threat to the established order (chapter 6). The history of freedom is a history of suffering (chapter 7). The Church is a movement, a "being called out", an exodus, etc. (chapter 8). We now have to choose between methods in theology, and ways of being Catholic: the way of transcendental idealism of one sort or another, or the way of telling stories that affect our practice (chapter 9). Bourgeois teleology of evolution must be challenged by biblical eschatology of catastrophe (chapter 10).

In the final chapters Metz works out the three basic categories of the kind of theological work which he envisages. The