

enough. It is through Christian living that tragical mimesis is to be acted out, in both senses of the term.

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SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA: MYSTIC OF FIRE, PREACHER OF FREEDOM
 by Paul Murray OP, *World on Fire Institute*, 2020, pp. xiii + 184, \$27.00, hbk

If ever the world needed the help and wisdom of Caterina di Giacomo di Benincasa, St Catherine of Siena, it is now. In Professor Murray's eyes, the 'mystic of fire', as he calls her, speaks as clearly and loudly now as she did 650 years ago in her beloved native Italy. 'For all her brilliance', as he writes in the Introduction to his new book on her, 'Catherine comes across to us more as an apostle than an intellectual, more as a preacher than a scholar' (p.iv). In this respect she shares her theological method with her great late-medieval sisters, Julian of Norwich and Teresa of Avila (proclaimed, like Catherine, a Doctor of the Church, 50 years ago in 1970 by St Pope Paul VI) - not scholastic but rather women who speak to the hearts and minds of the faithful by means of direct expression and exhortation. We will look in vain for a *Summa* from these women but rather, according to Murray, what we get from Catherine is a '*Summa* set on fire, her writings characterized not by academic speculation but rather by a passionate and anguished concern for the salvation of the world' (p.iv). It is on these dual aspects of Catherine's message - her 'mystical fire' and her 'preaching of freedom' - that Murray dwells in this attractive book.

His work has three distinctive parts. First, 'Bondage into Freedom', looks at the role of freedom in Catherine's writing. As unexpected as it is welcome, Murray wants to show how the extraordinary and passionate life of Catherine, her brave encounters with the 'powers' of her day, stem directly from a theology of freedom that pervades her writing. To this end he brings her into conversation with the first of two intriguing partners: the Renaissance Platonist and philosopher, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. In the second part, 'Fire and Shadow: Catherine's Vision of the Self', Murray examines Catherine's writing on self-knowledge and, like freedom, the central role that this plays in her message. Here he introduces his second conversation partner, the 20th- Century Swiss psychologist Carl Jung. In particular, he explores here the notion of 'shadow' in Jung and Catherine. Finally, the last section, '*Laudare, Benedicere, Praedicare*' is possibly the most Dominican section of the book as he emphasizes the importance of praise, blessing, and preaching in Catherine's theology. Again, Murray's exposition of Catherine's approach to prayer, the wellspring of Christian life, apostolic ministry, especially to the poor and marginalized,

and evangelical proclamation of the Gospel offers a substantial pastoral (Dominican) theology of practice, which he demands the reader take seriously as a call to a new 'order of life'.

As with so much of Murray's writing, what is attractive in this new book is that the reader can approach it on several levels. For the serious scholar of Christian spirituality there are riches indeed here. The author's own translations of Catherine's writings, especially her letters, are fresh and appealing and in themselves are worth the read. However (scholar of Christian spirituality as I am) I turned first and avidly to the chapters on Pico della Mirandola and Jung. I was not disappointed. By placing Catherine into dialogue with Mirandola, one of the leading lights of Renaissance thought, we see how Catherine was very much a daughter of her times, fitting into the open and questing culture of early Renaissance Italy. It is not for nothing that she was canonized by her fellow Sieneese, Aeneas Piccolomini (Pope Pius II), a renowned master of Renaissance scholarship. It is doubtful whether (Anglophone) scholars of Catherine will have read much of Mirandola, and by including substantial extracts from his writings it is hoped that the author will initiate a deeper interest in this key figure. Mirandola's notion of *umanesimo* - humanity balanced between heaven and earth in a unique act of creation by God, as expressed in the 'Oration on the Dignity of Man' - perfectly complements Murray's exposition of Catherine's sacred humanity. As Mirandola expresses it in words given to God the Creator in an imaginary conversation with Adam: 'We have made you neither celestial nor terrestrial, neither mortal nor immortal, so that, as the free and sovereign sculptor of your own being, you can fashion yourself into whatever image you choose' (p.30).

In contrast, perhaps, Carl Jung will be better known to readers of the book. Or is he? Following that great Dominican son of Croydon, Victor White OP, Murray questions some received wisdom on Jung and quotes White with approval: 'I think the friendliness of Jung represents a far more serious and radical challenge to religion as we know it than did ever the hostility of Freud' (p.83). For White, in his dialogue with Jung, this came down to Jung's understanding of the shadow and evil, which White, good Thomist that he was, interpreted through the Angelic Doctor's lens of '*privatio boni*'. In this respect Catherine, too, is a true daughter of the Order as she proclaims that in God there can be no shadow only 'light surpassing all other light' (p.84). In navigating these psycho-spiritual rapids I usually advise students to recognise and acknowledge Jung's clinical importance and contribution whilst gently critiquing his less well developed ventures into Christian theology. Fortunately Murray adopts a similar tactic and accordingly allows us to see the profound psychological wisdom of Catherine, tempered as always by her Dominican worldview. But for those less interesting in academic disputes on the nature of evil, the book will be equally rewarding. The final section, in particular, is a heartfelt exposition of Catherine's 'practical theology' by a celebrated modern master of the subject. Throughout, Murray echoes Catherine in stressing that 'I am not

writing to you about what God has done and is still doing, because there is no language or pen up to the task' (p.114), but rather rests his commentary on the interface of 'what can be said' and 'what cannot be said'. Catherine, through Professor Murray's pen, makes manifest the divine healing love of God that, as I stated at the outset, the world sorely needs right now. A book to treasure and return to.

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COMPANIONS IN THE BETWEEN: AUGUSTINE, DESMOND, AND THEIR COMMUNITIES OF LOVE by Renée Köhler-Ryan, *Pickwick/Wipf and Stock, Eugene, OR, 2019, pp. xxii + 159, £18.00, pbk*

In *Desire, Dialectic, and Otherness* (1987), William Desmond describes his philosophy as 'an Augustinian odyssey, embarked on in the wake of Hegel'. More than a dozen books later, the odyssey continues. Widely recognized as a metaphysician and philosopher of religion, Desmond's engagement with Hegel receives much attention in the secondary literature. His relationship to Saint Augustine receives significantly less. Yet, as the quote from his early study suggests, Desmond views Augustine as a key guide in his thinking. In *Companions in the Between*, Renée Köhler-Ryan explores this relationship.

According to Köhler-Ryan, Desmond affirms two major 'Augustinian' positions. He affirms that the restlessness of human desire finds rest in God. God does not offer static repose, though, but dynamic release, a gift of love that exceeds whatever we lack. Desmond also agrees with Augustine that 'our elemental worth issues from the intrinsically good gift of being, and we experience this in a fundamentally life-affirming incarnational manner' (p.11). Creation is a *metaxu* or between, a community of intricately singular but also intricately related creatures. We are part of this community, yet we can never fully grasp any other creature within it, let alone the community as a whole or the divine origin that sustains it. Sights, smells, tastes, and textures continually impress on our 'porous' inner depths. Constantly inundated by the exorbitance of creation, we easily become inured. Nevertheless, it can always strike us anew with astonished wonder, a wonder that entails implicit affirmation of being's goodness. This strike can leave us wondering not only at creation but also its creator.

As these glosses suggest, Desmond develops Augustine's insights in his own way. Köhler-Ryan provocatively claims, then, that we can actually pursue 'an Augustinian odyssey in the wake of Desmond', where the 'ground...continually reverberates, throughout the whole of creation, stable in its dynamism, constant in its eternally issuing agapeic love' (p.17).