

Simone Fidati da Cascia and the doctrine of St. Catherine of Siena

It is the considered opinion of the most authoritative critic of the letters of St. Catherine of Siena that the greatest influence on her spiritual doctrine were the writings of the celebrated Dominican author, Domenico Cavalca (c. 1270-1342)¹⁾. Like his confrères, Giordano da Rivalto (1260-1311) and Jacopo Passavanti (1302-57), Cavalca was an exponent of the Augustinian tradition of spirituality. This is evident from the *Specchio di Croce* and the *Disciplina degli spirituali*, two treatises that are generally regarded as his.

There is no doubt that these writings either directly or indirectly were used by Catherine as source-material for her earliest letters which date from 1367-74. But the *Specchio* and the *Disciplina* have also been attributed to an equally important, if not greater spiritual figure, the Augustinian, Simone Fidati da Cascia (c. 1290-1348)²⁾. Leaving aside these controversial treatises, we shall consider the possibility of his influence on the doctrine of Catherine purely on the basis of writings which are beyond question the work of this remarkable friar³⁾.

¹⁾ Cf. E. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, *Sulla composizione del « Dialogo » di Santa Caterina de Siena*, in *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, cxvii (1941), 200, n. 1, where it is stated that in all probability Cavalca is 'la vera fonte di Caterina'.

²⁾ There is a useful though inconclusive study of the authorship problem in G. McNEIL, *Simone Fidati and his « De gestis domini salvatoris »* (Washington, 1950), pp. 225-32. Sister McNeil sides in favour of Cavalca.

³⁾ Citations of Catherine's letters are from the magnificent critical edition by DUPRÉ THESEIDER, *Epistolario di S. Caterina da Siena* (Fonti per la storia d'Italia pubblicate dal R. Istituto Storico Italiano per il medio evo — Epistolari — secolo XIV, no. 82), i (Rome, 1940). This is the only volume which has appeared

Little is known with certainty of the early life of Simone Fidati, but it is commonly accepted that he was born towards the close of the thirteenth century ⁴). After joining the Augustinian order he came under the influence of Angelo of Clarenò, leader of the Franciscan Spirituals, whose example and teaching profoundly affected his spiritual development. Simone rapidly gained fame as a preacher, while numerous individuals and not a few religious communities sought his direction as a master of the spiritual life. When he died on 2 February 1348, possibly as a result of the plague, his reputation as a mystic was solidly established and he occupies an assured place in the history of *trecento* Italian spirituality.

Simone's claim as a spiritual writer of exceptional value rests largely on his massive *De gestis domini salvatoris* ⁵). This monumental work, which embodies material drawn from his sermons and letters and treatises such as *Vita Cristiana* and *Regola Spirituale*, consists of fourteen books dealing with the life of Christ. Though Simone did not live to see its completion, the *De Gestis* is now recognised as an important landmark in the long tradition of the *Vitae Christi* and in point of time it shortly precedes the much more famous *Vita* by Ludolph the Carthusian ⁶).

As is only to be expected, Simone's thought largely reflects the current trend of spiritual writings of his time, but he differs sharply in method from his contemporaries; he seldom cites an author by name, relying *ex professo* on sacred scripture as his sole

so far. The letters are cited below as 'Dupré Theseider', followed by the number of the letter in upper case roman numerals, with page and line reference to the *Epistolario*. It has been thought helpful to append within brackets the corresponding text in the edition by N. TOMMASEO, *Le lettere di S. Caterina*, reprinted by P. Misciattelli (cited as 'Misc') (3 vols, Florence, 1939-40). A reference is occasionally made to a letter printed in E. G. GARDNER, *Saint Catherine of Siena* (London, 1907).

⁴) The best account of Simone's life is in McNEIL, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-38.

⁵) For this work see McNEIL, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

⁶) Simone planned a final book, *De fine hominum*, but died before writing it. His disciple and collaborator, Giovanni da Salerno, added in its place an earlier treatise of Simone's *De iusticia christiana*, which now stands as Book XV, and he is responsible for the appearance of the whole in its present form. McNeil, it may be pointed out, is completely unaware of a much earlier work which seems to point the way for Simone's *De Gestis*. In the B. M. Royal MS 7 b. vii, ff. 10-266, there is a treatise entitled *Tractatus de gestis domini salvatoris*, divided into fourteen books. The author was evidently an Englishman and the

authority — in this respect he foreshadows John Wyclif ⁷⁾. Yet it is clear that Simone was steeped in patristic and medieval sources. Of the Latin Fathers St. Augustine influenced him most ⁸⁾, though he also made much use the writings of Jerome, Leo the Great and Isidore ⁹⁾. His borrowings from Greek patrology are mainly from the works of Basil, John Climacus and Chrysostom. That he should have delved into Cassian's *Conlationes* and *Institutiones* is not surprising and probably through these he derived his knowledge of the *Vitae Patrum*. While it is difficult to form a clear idea of his indebtedness to medieval writers owing to his refusal to indicate authorities, there can be no doubt that he was influenced by the works of Anselm, Bernard, Aelred, Peter Damian and Innocent III's *De contemptu mundi*. Even though he was trained in the schools, he had no time for the method of scholastics who introduced their discussions with the word 'Utrum' ¹⁰⁾. Perhaps the greatest single influence on Simone's whole thought was Angelo of Clareno.

The obvious link between Catherine and the writings of Simone would be William Flete. This is not the place to set forth the evidence for the pivotal role which the English Austin Friar played in the development of Catherine's mysticism ¹¹⁾. What is interesting is that he was the only Augustinian who was qualified to give her the direction she needed during the crucial period of her spiritual

text was written about the end of the twelfth century. Cf. Sir George F. WARNER and Julius P. GILSON, *Catalogue of the western manuscripts in the old royal and king's collection in the British Museum*, i (London, 1921), 170.

⁷⁾ Cf. R. C. PETRY, *Emphasis on the gospel and christian reform in late mediaeval preaching*, in *Church History*, xvi (1947), 75-9-, cited by McNEIL, *op. cit.*, p. 77, n. 58.

⁸⁾ Giovanni da Salerno in his Italian version of the *De Gestis* writes: '... Il nostro padre frate Symone, il quale intese chiaramente la scrittura di san Pavolo e di santo Augustino (*Gli evangelii del B. Simone da Cascia*, ed. N. Mattioli, O.S.A. [Rome, 1902], p. 119).

⁹⁾ For these and other sources used by Simone, see McNEIL, *op. cit.*, *passim*. Rome, 1898, p. 293.

¹⁰⁾ Cf. McNEIL, *op. cit.*, p. 80, n. 70.

¹¹⁾ I have gone into this question at length in my doctoral dissertation, *William Flete, O.S.A. and St. Catherine of Siena* (National University of Ireland, 1955). Cf. A. GRION, O. P., *Santa Caterina da Siena: dottrina e fonti* (Brescia, 1953), pp. 174-99. The value of this courageous and penetrating study suffers unfortunately from the author's misguided attempt to establish Catherine's dependence on Ubertino da Casale's, *Arbor vitae crucifixa Iesu* and with it, to some extent, Flete's influence on her theological formation.

formation, and that her thought and the literary form she gave it reveal her acquaintance with ideas and expressions which are typical of Simone Fidati. Though no admirer of Catherine, Giovanni da Salerno, Simone's literary executor, lived at San Leonardo, about one mile from Flete's convent, Lecceto, of which it was a dependency. The writings of Simone were easily accessible to Flete. Fra Filippo Agazzari, the famed author of the *Assempri* and Flete's contemporary at Lecceto, translated into Italian Simone's *magnum opus*, *De gestis domini salvatoris* ¹²). There was, moreover, a close affinity of outlook between Simone and Flete. Both were lovers of solitude and strongly denounced wandering religious — *girovagi* as Simone called them ¹³). Both emphasised spiritual reading, meditation, contemplation and other practices of the interior life as essential elements of the true Augustinian character. Both set themselves strongly against the vanity and cult of profane learning ¹⁴).

The standpoint and particular scope of Flete's extant writings that date from his years at Lecceto (1359 - c. 1390) do not lend themselves to an assessment of his actual knowledge of Fidati's works; but if Catherine's *epistolario* owes much, as we hope to show, to the early *trecento* Augustinian from Cascia, Flete was the most likely channel.

In his *Vita Cristiana* Simone begins by asking the soul to enter into itself and consider God's goodness in creating it from nothing, in granting it the gifts of nature and grace: 'in questo studio', he concludes, 'incomincia a umiliarti, ed esser grata, conoscendo la tua nichilità e pensando i suoi beneficii dati che hai ricevuti' ¹⁵). God, Simone adds, has not been content to bestow merely created gifts; he has in fact given even himself in the form of his Son.

The next step in the way of perfection, according to Simone,

¹²) The edition cited hereafter is that printed at Cologne in 1540 and entitled *Simonis de Cassia doctissimi pientissimique viri, de gestis domini salvatoris in quatuor evangelistas, libri quindecim*. Agazzari's Italian version is extant in Siena, Biblioteca Comunale MS I.V.10 (saec. XIV, ex).

¹³) Cf. Letters 13 and 20 (ed. cit., pp. 347, 382).

¹⁴) See McNEIL, *op. cit.*, pp. 43, 80-82. For Flete's views cf. *De litteris ineditis fr. Willelmi de Fleete* (cc. 1368-80), ed. M.-H. Laurent, O. P. in *Analecta Augustiniana*, xviii (1942), 322.

¹⁵) *Vita Cristiana*, I.i, ed. Mattioli in *Il B. Simone Fidati da Cascia* (Rome, 1898), p. 129. There is a more recent edition of the text in A. LEVASTI, *Mistici del duecento e del trecento* (Rome, 1937).

is man's recognition of his own vileness, frailty and great misery which ultimately derive from the Fall when 'fu corrotta la umana natura' ¹⁶). At the root of all sin lies self-will and there can be no advance towards union with God unless this 'volontà sensuale' (which Catherine is so insistent on condemning) be destroyed. Thus it is necessary to love ¹⁷ :

col cuore viltà, riprensione, correzione, ammonizione, dispetto, tribolazione, angustia, infermità... ; e li considera siccome ministri di Dio mandati da lui in vendetta de' tuoi mali e siccome medici e medecine dele tue infermità ; e amare sommamente ogni impedimento delle volontà sensuale o umana.

These fundamental points in Simone's system are in striking accord with Catherine's. Both she and Simone were deeply concerned with man's sensual will, and the means they recommend for killing it are the same ¹⁸). So far, however, Simone scarcely departs from medieval writers generally, but he immediately introduces as an essential prerequisite for union with God, the necessity of detachment from the world ; this means he says ¹⁹) :

amare quelle cose che Cristo amò, le quali manifestano la sua vita, privata d'onore e d'ogni diletto; ornata d'ogni cosa che al mondo dispiace ; odiare quello che Cristo ebbe in odio...

The formula, to love what Christ loves and to hate what Christ hates, first appears in Catherine's *epistolario* early in 1372-3 and afterwards remains a basic axiom of her teaching ²⁰). More impor-

¹⁶) *Op. cit.*, I.ii.130; vii.146.

¹⁷) *Ibid.* x.159.

¹⁸) Cf. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, especially XXXVI, 151, 10-16 (= TOMMASEO, 148); XLIX, 188, 15-21 (= TOMMASEO, 108) and LII, 203, 9-20; 207, 3-5 (= GARDNER, *St Cath.*, letter I). See also *ibid.* LV, 220, 17-22 (= TOMMASEO, 181); LIX, 292, 17-26 (= TOMMASEO, 165); LXXV, 308, 25-309, 5 (= TOMMASEO, 232); LXXXV, 347, 9-20 (= TOMMASEO, 246). Cf. also Catherine's *Dialogo della divina provvidenza*, ed. I. Taurisano, O. P. (Rome, 1947), cap. lxxvi. 174-6; lxxviii. 181; c. 242-3; cxlv. 411.

¹⁹) *Vita Cristiana*, I.x.160.

²⁰) Cf. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, V, 27, 15-16 (= TOMMASEO, 204); VII, 35, 7-8 (= TOMMASEO, 99); XVIII, 74, 15-20 (= TOMMASEO, 29); XXIII, 100, 22-8 (= TOMMASEO, 101); XL, 162, 4-6 (= TOMMASEO, 145); XLIX, 188, 10-21 (= TOMMASEO, 108); LI, 196, 10-11 (= TOMMASEO, 109); LII, 203, 5-20 (= GARDNER, *St Cath.*, letter I); LIV, 213, 8-10 (= TOMMASEO, 185), and *Dialogo passim*.

tant still, she employs it within the exact context of the passage from the *Vita Cristiana* ²¹), which gives good grounds for believing that she actually borrowed it from Simone's works ; and it is equally significant to find him using the phrase, 'l'amore della virtù e l'odio del vizio', one of Catherine's favourite sayings ²²).

Further parallels between Catherine's doctrine and that of the *Vita Cristiana* could be adduced, but here we need mention only one other point, namely Catherine's well known *dictum* : 'Non aspettiate el tempo, ché 'l tempo non aspetta voi' ²³). In Simone's *Vita Cristiana* a somewhat similar expression occurs and may well have provided the basis of Catherine's. Simone writes : 'molti aspettano di fare il meglio, e non fanno poscia nè l'uno nè l'altro. Però chi tempo aspettò, tempo perdè e chi tempo perdè, tempo aspettato non vide' ²⁴).

The forty or more letters of Simone, published by Mattioli, also furnish a number of interesting comparisons with aspects of the teaching of Catherine ²⁵). He describes charity as the queen of the virtues ²⁶), and following Cassian he points out that bodily penances are instruments of virtue, not virtues themselves ²⁷). So, too, Catherine, as we read in her *Dialogo* : '... atto di fuori o con diverse e varie penitenzie, le quali sono strumento di virtù, ma non virtù' ²⁸).

These letters of Simone bring out clearly the Augustinian nature of his thought ; and he stresses again and again the importance of the doctrine of the mystical body of Christ. He makes the point which Catherine is so anxious to impress on the minds of her readers, namely, that it is necessary and fitting for members joined to Christ the Head to conform to him, especially in suffering ²⁹).

²¹) See especially DUPRÉ THESEIDER, VII, XVIII, XLIX and LII (*loc. cit.*).

²²) *Vita Cristiana*, I.xvi.184, 223. Cf. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XVII, 64, 11 (= TOMMASEO, 28): 'amando la virtù e odiando el vitio'. See also *Dialogo*, xxiii. 54.

²³) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XVIII, 78, 22. Cf. LXIII, 267, 9-10 (= TOMMASEO, 206); LXVIII, 267, 13-14 (= TOMMASEO, 207).

²⁴) *Op. cit.*, I. xii. 166. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, *Epist.* 78, n. 28, cites Filippo Agazzari's *Assempri*, but Catherine was writing long before the date of this work.

²⁵) A. C. DE ROMANIS, O. S. A., *S. Caterina da Siena e gli eremitani di Sant'Agostino* (Florence, 1948), p. 27, n. 1.

²⁶) Letter 2, *loc. cit.* 285. Cf. *Dialogo*, clx. 475.

²⁷) Letters 15, 22, *loc. cit.* 356, 390.

²⁸) *Dialogo*, ix. 22. Cf. xi. 27; c. 244; civ. 254, and below.

²⁹) Letter 2, *loc. cit.* 279. Cf. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XLI, 169, 3-6 (= TOMMASEO, 138); LI, 195, 18-21 (= TOMMASEO, 109); LXXXIV, 345, 25-7 (= TOMMASEO, 189).

Simone likewise teaches that God allows temptations in order to prove our virtue³⁰), and he accepts the will for the deed when deeds are not possible³¹). Catherine makes these observations over and over again. No doubt they are commonplace; but the same cannot be said of her use of imagery, although her similes are not at all as original as has been too often supposed. One of the best known of these is her comparison between the tepid soul and the fly which hovers around the boiling pot³²). Simone also utilises this simile in a letter³³). It must not be thought that Catherine borrowed it from him. As a matter of fact she found it in the *Vitae Patrum*, probably in the Italian version attributed to Cavalca³⁴). On the other hand, Simone may well provide the clue to the origin of a peculiar phrase in a letter written or dictated by Catherine during Lent, 1372 or 1373 and addressed to Bartolomeo Dominici, perhaps the most influential of her Dominican friends at this period. Having referred to the Pauline distinction between the milk and solid food of Christ's doctrine, Catherine adds: 'E dicovi ch' e' vostri denti debili saranno fortificati'³⁵). There is an undeniable Augustinian flavour about this unusual expression, but the nearest we can get to suggesting any precise source is a passage in one of Fidati's letters: 'Non enim indiges lacte, sed solido cibo. Non es edentulus, sed dentatus'³⁶).

Though Simone Fidati's *Vita Cristiana* and his letters are worthy of consideration as sources for Catherine's doctrine, their importance is very much secondary to that of the *De gestis domini salvatoris*. The declared purpose of this hefty study is to enable man to

³⁰) Letter 9, *loc. cit.* 313. Cf. *Dialogo*, xliii. 95.

³¹) Letters 6 and 25, *loc. cit.* 306, 417.

³²) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, LXXIII, 302, 8-9 (= TOMMASEO, 287). Cf. *Dialogo*, xc. 213, and TOMMASEO, 287 (Misc. iv. 269).

³³) Letter 5, *loc. cit.* 297.

³⁴) Cf. *Vitae Patrum*, III. 204 (PL lxxiii. 805). The simile was known to the English mystic, Walter Hilton, Catherine's contemporary. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, *loc. cit.*, n: 8, and *art. cit.*, 200, n. 1, thought it might have come from Gregory the Great or Augustine.

³⁵) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, IX, 41, 11-16 (= TOMMASEO, 109). Cf. *ibid.*, IV, 25, 1-3 (= TOMMASEO, 198).

³⁶) Letter 24, *loc. cit.*, 405. Cf. AUGUSTINE, *Enarratio in Ps.* CXXX, 12 (PL xxxvii. 1713), the source cited by DUPRÉ THESEIDER, *loc. cit.*, n. 5. A closer source is AUGUSTINE, *Ep.* CCXLIII, 8 (CSEL, lvii. 575, 1-3).

perfect the three faculties of his soul, intellect, will and memory ³⁷⁾. It is worth noting that Catherine's system, if we may use this term of her doctrine, is built around the same theme ³⁸⁾. In seeking to establish a connexion between the teaching of the Virgin of Fontebranda and the Umbrian Augustinian, we need hardly say that Catherine is more likely to have been influenced by the shorter Italian version of *De Gestis* made by Giovanni da Salerno at the request of Simone's spiritual daughters than by the original Latin text ³⁹⁾. None the less, this Latin text cannot be disregarded. It was doubtless much more familiar to Flete than the Italian of his confrère, Giovanni da Salerno, and in any case it contains a number of very interesting points which were omitted from the Italian.

At the outset it may be well to consider some proofs of Catherine's knowledge of the abbreviated version known as the *Esposizione volgare de' vangeli* ⁴⁰⁾. Writing during the month of March 1374 to her friends Tommaso di Antonio da Siena or Caffarini and Bartolomeo Dominici, Catherine takes advantage of the feast of Palm Sunday to set forth for their benefit an allegorical interpretation of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. In doing so she writes as if she had a passage from the Italian text of Simone's work in mind :

Catherine ⁴¹⁾

Però disse el nostro Salvatore che una delle cagioni, infra l'altre, per la quale elli venisse sopra essa (the ass), si fu per dimostrare a noi la nostra umanità in quello che ella era venuta per lo peccato, a dimostrare che modo ci conviene

Simone ⁴²⁾

Volendo il nostro Salvatore entrare in Gerusalem, la quale è interpretate visione di pace, vi andò a cavallo sopra un'asina e il suo figliuolo ; a dare noi ammaestramento ed esempio... che... è di bisogno che noi sagliamo con l'animo e

³⁷⁾ Cf. McNEIL, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

³⁸⁾ GRION, *S. Caterina*, pp. 15-35.

³⁹⁾ McNEIL, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-2. The date of the translation is uncertain. It cannot have been earlier than 1348, the year of Simone's death, but there is no good reason for dating it, as does Mattioli, to 1380. Cf. *ibid.* If, as Mattioli believed, the translation was made when Giovanni da Salerno was fifty years old, then it should be dated to 1367.

⁴⁰⁾ Hereafter cited as *Evangelii*.

⁴¹⁾ DUPRÉ THESEIDER, 84, 3-9 (= TOMMASEO, 127). Cf. *ibid.*, VIII, 38, 12-39, 4 (= TOMMASEO, 105).

⁴²⁾ *Evangelii*, IV. iii. 459-60

tenere con questa asina della nostra umanità. Drittamente senza veruna differentia, non ci à tra noi e la bestia cavelle : la ragione per lo peccato diventa animale.

con lo spirito, o vero con la ragione, e sediamo sopra l'asina e il puledro suo, cioè sopra la carne nostra e sopra lo spirito suo figliuolo bestiale... Se lo spirito dell'uomo si sottomette alla carne e al suo bestiale appetito, già non è spirito ragionevole e umano ; anzi è bestiale. E tale uomo ... è bestia.

Catherine, as Dupré Theseider notes ⁴³), must be referring either to a private revelation or to some commentary on the gospel, since the words which she attributes to Christ are not scriptural. He suggests the Italian version of the *De Gestis* as the most likely source of her interpretation of the gospel scene — a reasonable conclusion, no doubt, in view of the striking similarity between the passages quoted above. At the same time it is well to recall that the central idea ultimately derives from Augustine ⁴⁴). One can also see how the original Latin text of Simone's work influenced Catherine's treatment of the subject, for in an earlier letter she states : 'salga sopra l'asina della nostra umanità, si ch'ella non vadi mai se non secondo che la ragione la guida' ⁴⁵). Though this comparison of the soul and body to a rider and horse is Platonic in origin, Simone, following Augustine, introduces it into the *De Gestis* with reference to Christ and his entry into Jerusalem, which is likewise the context of Catherine's two letters ⁴⁶). It would seem, therefore, that both

⁴³) *Epist.* 84, n. 10.

⁴⁴) Cf. *Ennarrationes in Pss. XXXIII*, sermo ii, 5; *CVII* (PL xxxvi. 310; xxxvii. 1427; *In ep. Joannis ad Parthos*, tract. VII. iv. 2 (*ibid.* xxxv. 2030). The imagery was also known to Flete who applied it to Catherine herself in his *Sermo in reverentiam B. Catherinae*, ed. R. FAWTIER, *Catheriniana*, in *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire*, xxxiv (1914), 72.

⁴⁵) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, VIII, 38, 18-39, 1 (= TOMMASEO, 105). Cf. *Evangelii*, loc. cit.: 'è di bisogno che noi sagliamo con l'animo e con lo spirito, o vero con la ragione, e sediamo sopra l'asina'.

⁴⁶) Cf. *De Gestis*, IV. vii. 162b-3b: 'Non sessor ab equo, sed equus a sessore dirigitur... Erit igitur pax corporis atque animae, ordinata subiectio corporis ad animam, ipsum in ratione ducentem... Ascendit animalia Iesus, inter allegorica mores cudens, ut super omnem animalitatem, rationis imperio et loro regiminis ascendamus'.

the Latin and Italian versions of Simone's work contributed to Catherine's interpretation of the gospel.

In her letter of 1367 to the Augustinian nuns in Siena Catherine mentions the narrow gate of obedience and asks that the nuns should humble themselves 'acciò che la superbia della loro volontà non lo' rompesse el capo' ⁴⁷). Elsewhere she identifies the 'porta stretta' with Christ and thus follows Augustine who also pictures the proud man breaking his head in trying to enter the lowly door ⁴⁸). In a letter written early in 1376 the imagery of the narrow door reappears again and from a parallel passage in the *Dialogo* it is evident that in this particular instance the context is precisely that of a passage in the *Evangelii* :

Catherine ⁴⁹)

Simone ⁵⁰)

come superbi credavamo
passare per la porta stretta col
peso dell'affettuoso perverso
amore del mondo... Voglio
dunque che ci leviamo el carico
d'ogni vanità del mondo e
amore proprio di te medesimo.
Sai tu perché che la porta è
stretta, unde doviamo passare ?
... Dico che debba chinare el
capo perché la porta è bassa :
portandolo alto ce 'l romparem-
mo ; vuolsi chinare per vera e
santa umilità.

la porta del paradiso è mol-
to stretta e bassa, per la quale
nullo uomo ricco vestito d'amo-
re di ricchezze nè superbo col
capo levato e enfiato di vento
di vanagloria puote intrare :
nanzi potrebbe crepare e rom-
persi il capo.

Finally, we have Catherine's letter to the community of nuns, founded by Simone himself. Writing in March 1376 she devotes the main part of her letter to the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and their corresponding virtues. She stresses the relationship between humility and obedience, and this part of the letter

⁴⁷) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, I, 10, 9-10 (= TOMMASEO, 30).

⁴⁸) Cf. *Dialogo*. cxxxi. 350 and AUGUSTINE, *In Joannis Evang.*, tract. XLV. x. 5 (PL xxxv, 1721); and *Sermo CCCXI*, iii (*ibid.* xxxviii. 1415).

⁴⁹) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, LIX, 240, 17-241, 5 (= TOMMASEO, 165). Cf. *Dialogo*, cl. 431-2.

⁵⁰) *Evangelii*, I. xi. 41. Cf. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, LXI, 253, 19-20 (= TOMMASEO, 177).

seems to have been based on an early section of Simone's work. Commenting on Christ's humble subjection to Mary and Joseph, he underlines the connexion between humility and obedience ⁵¹⁾, and states, as does Catherine in her *Dialogo*, that obedience is the key which opens heaven ⁵²⁾. The disobedient religious is described by Simone as 'monaco del diavolo' ⁵³⁾ — a term which Catherine also uses in her letter to the nuns: 'che è la religiosa senza el giogo dell'ubedientia ? è morta, e dirittamente è uno dimonio incarnato' ⁵⁴⁾. Towards the close of her discussion on religious obedience Catherine introduces the problem of selfwill: her treatment of it in relation to obedience is strikingly reminiscent of Simone's:

Catherine ⁵⁵⁾

ucidete la vostra perversa
volontà; non ribelate mai alla
vera obedientia... ogni pena
procede dalla volontà propria.

Simone ⁵⁶⁾

ne la vera ubbidienza s'uc-
cide la propria volontà. Seme
d'ogni male si è la propria
volontà... l'ubbidienza sì la
secco.

We shall have occasion again to consider in the light of Simone's teaching the question of self-will as Catherine understands it, but here it is evident from the context and points treated by Catherine in her letter to the nuns at S. Gaggio that her *exposé* of religious obedience was almost certainly derived from Simone.

There is in fact abundant and clear evidence of kinship of thought and expression between Simone and Catherine; but to examine in detail and demonstrate fully the extent of her dependence on his *De Gestis* or the *Evangelii* would carry us far beyond the limits, or indeed the exigencies, of this article. It will be suffi-

⁵¹⁾ *Evangelii*, I. xiii. 55-6. Cf. *De Gestis*, IV. i. 124b.

⁵²⁾ *Ibid.*, 55. Cf. *Dialogo*, cliv. 448; clv. 451.

⁵³⁾ *Ibid.* Cf. *De Gestis*, loc. cit.

⁵⁴⁾ DUPRÉ THESEIDER, LXI, 260, 12-14.

⁵⁵⁾ *Ibid.*, 260, 21-261, 1. The same idea is found in her letter to Tommaso della Fonte, written before the summer of 1374 (*ibid.*, III, 19, 4-6 = TOMMASEO, 41). DUPRÉ THESEIDER suggests St. Bernard, *In tempore Resurrectionis*, sermo iii, 3 (PL clxxxiii. 290), as Catherine's source, but Bernard does not treat of self-will and obedience, neither does he describe a disobedient religious as an incarnate devil.

⁵⁶⁾ *Evangelii*, loc. cit. Cf. *De Gestis*, loc. cit., 122b.

cient for our purpose to indicate firstly certain Augustinian aspects of Simone's teaching which make their appearance in Catherine's writings, and then to draw attention to features of Simone's views on the spiritual life in general and their value as source material for Catherine's doctrine.

In the *De Gestis* and *Evangelii* there is a wealth of Augustinian imagery, some of which we have already noted as typical of Catherine's writings. For example, Simone, following Augustine, depicts Christ as the heavenly doctor who drank first himself the bitter medicine of suffering lest his weak patients might fear to take it ⁵⁷). He mentions the school of Christ ⁵⁸) and the teacher's chair, namely the Cross ⁵⁹). In the open side of Christ he sees an invitation to all to enter and share the secret of love which it symbolises ⁶⁰). His most favourite view of life is that of a voyage ⁶¹) across the bitter sea of this world ⁶²), and he points out the terrifying possibility of being drowned in the sea of damnation ⁶³). If we wish to be saved we must cling to the cross of Christ ⁶⁴). Simone also compares life to a pilgrimage ⁶⁵), and describes the affections as the feet of the soul ⁶⁶). Love, we are told, is like fire which of its nature tends upwards ⁶⁷), while the ten talents mentioned in the gospel parable are interpreted as the ten commandments ⁶⁸).

⁵⁷) *De Gestis*, V. xiii. 216b = *Evangelii*, II. xv. 199.

⁵⁸) *Ibid.*, V. i. 183b. Cf. *Evangelii*, I. xix. 105, etc.

⁵⁹) *Ibid.*, XIII. cxiii. 877a (omitted in *Evangelii*).

⁶⁰) *Ibid.*, XIII. cxxv. 888b = *Evangelii*, IV. xix. 555. Cf. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, LXXXIV, 341, 3-6 (= TOMMASEO, 189); *Dialogo*, lxxv. 173; cxxiv. 315 and AUGUSTINE, *Sermo CCCXI*, iii (PL xxxviii. 1415).

⁶¹) *Ibid.*, IV. vii. 162a; V. xxiv. 278b, etc. = *Evangelii*, II. vi. 153 sqq.; II. ix. 168.

⁶²) *Ibid.*, IV. vii. 162b; V. ii. 193a-5a, etc. = *Evangelii*, II. vi. 153; II. viii. 165, etc.

⁶³) *Ibid.*, V. xvi. 235a, etc. = *Evangelii*, II. xviii. 232. Cf. especially *Dialogo*, xlviii. 111.

⁶⁴) *De Gestis*, XIII. ciii. 862b (omitted in *Evangelii*).

⁶⁵) *Ibid.*, IV. vii. 160b; V. xxxiii. 270b, etc. Cf. *Evangelii*, II. viii. 161; II. xxx. 291, etc.

⁶⁶) *Ibid.*, V. xvi. 233a; XIII. xii. 776a-b, etc. = *Evangelii*, II. xvii. 225; IV. ix. 473, etc.

⁶⁷) *Ibid.*, IX. xxiv. 549a (omitted in *Evangelii*).

⁶⁸) *Ibid.*, VI. xxix. 365b (omitted in *Evangelii*). Cf. AUGUSTINE, *Quaestiones Evangeliorum*, II. xlvi (PL xxxv. 1359) and DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XXI, 89, 10-13 (= TOMMASEO, 70).

When we remember that Simone was well versed in the works of Augustine it is not surprising to find that most, if not all, of the great Augustinian themes which inspire Catherine's teaching also appear in the *De Gestis* and *Evangelii*. Thus Simone recognises fully the value of self-knowledge as a discipline in humility and as a stepping stone to knowledge and love of God ⁶⁹). The problem of evil pervades his writings and he accepts Augustine's classical teaching on the subject ⁷⁰). Sin, he states in the opening chapter of the first book of the *De Gestis*, is 'positive nihil' ⁷¹), and its origin is to be found in man's perverse will which assumes the role of *causa deficiens* ⁷²). Moreover, Simone, following Augustine, regards those who love sin as participating in and becoming one with sin itself which is devoid of being ⁷³). Everything other than sin is to be held in reverence ⁷⁴).

Though there is no technical or lengthy discussion in the *De Gestis* or *Evangelii* on the Augustinian theory of divine illumination, Simone definitely appears to have been influenced by Augustine's teaching. He refers to blindness of the intellect and points out the necessity of purging the eye of the soul so that divine light, which the unhealthy eye cannot bear, may illumine the soul ⁷⁵). There can be no doubt that Simone upholds the existence of a natural illumination of the intellect ⁷⁶), but he is one with Augustine in teaching that without the light of faith the mind is in darkness ⁷⁷). For Simone the only true illumination of the intellect is that which virtue provides ⁷⁸); and in this connexion it is to be noted that he is

⁶⁹) *Ibid.*, V. xii. 213b; IX. xv. 532a; IX. xvii. 539a-b. Cf. *Evangelii*, II. xiv. 191; II. xvi. 201; and especially III. xvii. 417.

⁷⁰) Cf. McNEIL, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-3.

⁷¹) *De Gestis*, I. o. 1b. Cf. *Evangelii*, IV. vii. 465: 'amando ... quello che niente, niente'.

⁷²) *Ibid.*, VII. xiii. 395a; VIII. xli. 491a; X. xxxiv. 631b. Cf. *Evangelii*, III. i. 308 (quoting St. Bernard whose teaching is based on Augustine); III. v. 355; III. viii. 372.

⁷³) *De Gestis*, VI. iii. 300a (omitted in *Evangelii*).

⁷⁴) *Evangelii*, IV. ix. 475: 'non reputa nè giudica niuna cosa vile se non il peccato'. Cf. *Dialogo*, lxxvii. 177-8: 'odia il peccato ed ogni altra cosa à in reverenzia'.

⁷⁵) *De Gestis*, VII. ix. 391a; X. iv. 602b-4a; IV. x. 179a; XIII. ix. 771a. Cf. *Evangelii*, III. o. 315-8; I. xiv. 64; IV. xvii. 572.

⁷⁶) *Ibid.*, VII. vi. 387a; VI. xii. 317a-b. Cf. *Evangelii*, III. xx. 442.

⁷⁷) *Ibid.*, VII. vi. 387a; VII. xxxvi. 415a-6b (omitted in *Evangelii*).

⁷⁸) *Ibid.*, V. xiv. 217b-8a = *Evangelii*, II. xvii. 202.

not thinking merely of that spiritual darkness which descends on the soul when man puts aside the dictates of reason or virtue ⁷⁹). Yet he rigidly maintains the distinction between the orders of grace and nature.

Apart from these and other considerations Simone anticipates very strikingly Catherine's teaching on one point, namely, choice of sin means a departure from reason, and consequently man loses the sublime dignity which he received through having been created in the image of God; he ceases to be human and becomes a beast ⁸⁰):

egli è inganato ed escito fuore de la sua mente. E chi è escito fuore de la sua mente si à dimenticato e à perduta la immagine e la figura di Dio in sè, cioè la ragione la quale ricevette quando Iddio il creò. E chi à perduta la ragione à perduta la vera luce e à acquistate le tenebre ed è diventato una bestia.

No doubt this antithesis between sin and reason can be traced back to sacred scripture ⁸¹), but Simone's development of it is precisely that which Catherine later adopted ⁸²).

At the centre of Simone's teaching on illumination stands the person of Christ ⁸³); and in his approach to the mystery of the Incarnation and in his treatment of Christ as redeemer, mediator and exemplar, he reflects very clearly Augustine's approach ⁸⁴). The way to heaven, we are told, the road along which we as pilgrims must walk briskly and without retracing our steps, because time is so very short ⁸⁵), is that marked out by Christ ⁸⁶) — the way of self-abasement and 'fame, sete, mala fama senza colpa, in-

⁷⁹) *Ibid.*, VII. 387a-b (omitted in *Evangelii*).

⁸⁰) *Evangelii*, I. xviii. 80. Cf. *ibid.*, I. xix. 107; II. v. 146, 148; II. xiv. 191; II. xvi. 207; II. xxiv. 258; and *De Gestis*, V. i. 185b; V. xii. 213b; V. xiv. 220a; V. xxix. 261b-7a.

⁸¹) Cf. *Pss.* XXXI, 9; XLVIII, 13, etc.

⁸²) Cf. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, X, 44, 16-17 (= TOMMASEO, 24); XXII, 92, 3-14 (= TOMMASEO, 149); *Dialogo*, li. 116.

⁸³) *De Gestis*, VII. xxxvi. 415a-6b (omitted in *Evangelii*).

⁸⁴) Cf. *ibid.*, VI. iii. 300a; VIII. xlii. 495a; V. xxvii. 257a; VIII. xxi. 432a-b; IX. iii. 511a; VI. xi. 314a; XII. cxvii. 882va; XIII. cxx. 884vb; and *Evangelii*, II. xxvii. 274; IV. xiii. 546; I. xiii. 55; II. xiii. 184; IV. xiii. 549, 551.

⁸⁵) *Ibid.*, IV. iv. 143b; XIII. xlii. 805a = *Evangelii*, I. xix. 99; IV. xii. 493. Cf. *ibid.*, I. xix. 102.

⁸⁶) *De Gestis*, V. iv. 201b = *Evangelii*, II. viii. 164.

giurie, vituperii, flagelli e qualunque altra pena' ⁸⁷). The true christian is one whose life is conformed with Christ crucified ⁸⁸). Elsewhere Simone describes christians as 'cavalieri' whose 'capitano' is Christ and whose standard is the 'gonfalone della croce' ⁸⁹). This imagery, it should be noted, also appears in Catherine's letters even before the summer of 1374 ⁹⁰), but what is still more significant is that she does not appear to have derived it either from Cavalca's writings or from any of the usually suggested sources of her doctrine ⁹¹).

Simone emphasises that virtues are proved by contraries, which also cure vices, a typical Augustinian viewpoint highly approved by Catherine ⁹²), and he assigns to the virtue of charity, which is accompanied by patience, the accomplishment of the union of the soul with God ⁹³). Love, he declares ⁹⁴), is truly the life of the soul which expands under the influence of charity ⁹⁵), or as Catherine once wrote: 'carità, la quale vi tolrà ogni timore e strettezza di cuore, daràvi fortezza e larghezza e libertà di cuore' ⁹⁶). Indeed her description of this effect of the love of God is clearly fores-

⁸⁷) *Evangelii*, IV. i. 452. Cf. *ibid.*, II. viii. 164 and *De Gestis*, V. iv. 201b; IV. ix. 169b.

⁸⁸) *De Gestis*, IX. xxxix. 575a. Cf. *Evangelii*, IV. xii. 484.

⁸⁹) *Evangelii*, II. xvii. 212; III. i. 324; IV. xxvii. 610. Cf. *De Gestis*, V. xv. 225a.

⁹⁰) Cf. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, V, 26, 20 (= TOMMASEO, 204); XI, 48, 9-15 (= TOMMASEO, 107). See also *ibid.*, XXIX, 120, 5 (= TOMMASEO, 129); L, 190, 12-192, 4 (= TOMMASEO, 257) and *Dialogo*, lxxvii. 179.

⁹¹) GRION, *St Caterina*, p. 236, states: 'Di origine ubertiniana sono pure le frasi cateriniane: « crociati desideri », « il gonfalone della croce »'. But the examples which he cites from Ubertino da Casale's *Arbor vitae crucifixae Jesu* are certainly not *ad rem*.

⁹²) *De Gestis*, IV. i. 125b; VI. x. 208b. Cf. *Evangelii*, II. xiii. 185. For Catherine's teaching, see especially DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XXXVI, 150, 18-21 (= TOMMASEO, 148); LXX, 290, 20-291, 31 (= TOMMASEO, 211); and *Dialogo*, xliii. 95-6.

⁹³) *Ibid.*, VI. v. 303b; X. xi. 606b; XI. liii. 725b. Cf. *Evangelii*, III. xiv. 407; IV. xii. 576.

⁹⁴) *Evangelii*, III. i. 305; III. xvii. 416.

⁹⁵) *De Gestis*, X. xxx. 629a; XIV. xiii. 911b. Cf. especially *Evangelii*, I. xx. 113; III. v. 346; IV. xvii. 581.

⁹⁶) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XXVIII, 118, 4-5 (= TOMMASEO, 88). Cf. *ibid.*, 11, 15, 6 (= TOMMASEO, 61); V, 27, 8-13 (= TOMMASEO, 204); XXIII, 99, 5 (= TOMMASEO, 101); LXI, 255, 5 (= TOMMASEO, 177).

hadowed in the *Evangelii* where we read: 'questo è il consumato e perfetto amore di Dio, quando l'anima tutta già trasformata in Dio non sa pensare nè parlare nè udire nè fare se non di Dio' ⁹⁷).

Apart from omitting to develop the reciprocal character of knowledge and love, Simone's rather intensive treatment of the function of the intellect in relation to the will, which he identifies with love, perfectly harmonises with Catherine's teaching ⁹⁸). The most convincing evidence, however, of their parallel systems of spirituality is to be found in their method of basing the ascent of the soul to God on the operations of its three faculties. Simone, it need scarcely be said, is a firm supporter of the Augustinian tradition which views the memory, intellect and will as three distinct potencies ⁹⁹). Thus he finds in the soul an image of the Trinity; and even though he does not explicitly compare either the memory, intellect or will with any one divine person, nevertheless he unhesitatingly appropriates power to the Father, wisdom to the Son and love or the will to the Holy Spirit ¹⁰⁰). This order of appropriation occupies a most important place in Catherine's doctrine and is at the same time notably absent from Italian sources other than Simone's work ¹⁰¹).

While he certainly appreciates the unitive and transformative

⁹⁷) *Evangelii*, II. xxvii. 274. Cf. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, III, 21, 14-15 (= TOMMASEO, 41): 'quando l'anima è molta unita e trasformata in Dio, dimentica sé e le creature'. See also *ibid.*, XVII, 77, 17-18 (= TOMMASEO, 29).

⁹⁸) Cf. *De Gestis*, IV. viii.. 159a-b; V. xviii. 238b and *Evangelii*, II. xiv. 192; II. xx. 238.

⁹⁹) *Ibid.*, I. xxvii. 40a; VI. i. 291b; VI. v. 303b; IX. v. 514a; XII. xv. 778b-9a; XIII. cxv. 881ra. Cf. *Evangelii*, I. xix. 95, 97; II. xxiii. 252-3; III. x. 386; III. xiv. 407; III. xvii. 417; IV. xii. 499.

¹⁰⁰) Cf. *De Gestis*, VI. i. 286b; XIII. xv. 778b-9a and especially *Evangelii*, II. xxvi. 269-70; III. ix. 378. Catherine almost always uses the term 'clemenza' when referring to the Holy Spirit: the same concept also appears in Simone's work: 'quoniam in spirito sancto miseratio fit populorum et in sua virtute celebratur remissio peccatorum' (*De Gestis*, V. iv. 201a = *Evangelii*, II. xiii. 163). Cf. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XVII, 62, 6-10 (= TOMMASEO, 28): 'perdando l'uomo la gratia per lo peccato mortale ... raguardate, padre, che modo à tenuto la clementia dello Spirito santo a restituire la gratia all'uomo'.

¹⁰¹) GRION, S. *Caterina*, p. 226, admits that Ubertino's *Arbor Vitae* contains no explicit reference to what he calls: 'la quasi equivalenza fondamentale nella mistica di Caterina: Padre-Potenza, Figliuolo-Sapienza, Spirito Santo-Clemenza'. The same also holds for Cavalca's writings.

power of love, which is a vital principle ¹⁰²), and although he also recognises the power of the Eucharist in effecting conformity with Christ ¹⁰³), one fails to discover in his writings any reference to Augustine's teaching on the relationship between eucharistic and ecclesiastical communion. It is undoubtedly true that the doctrine of the mystical body of Christ looms very large in Simone's thought ¹⁰⁴). He insists repeatedly that it is fitting that the members of the body should conform with the head ¹⁰⁵); that their justification derives from their solidarity with Christ ¹⁰⁶); that sterile and unworthy members run the risk of being severed from his mystical body ¹⁰⁷). But strangely enough, Simone apparently never grasped the significance of Augustine's magnificent exposition of the connexion that exists between sacramental and ecclesiastical communion, which Catherine embodied in her doctrine ¹⁰⁸).

The overall Augustinian tendency of Simone's spiritual teaching, however, cannot be denied; and the very prominent place which goodwill and fervent and great desires occupy in his *De Gestis* and *Evangelii* reflects very clearly the influence of Augustine on his thought ¹⁰⁹). These movements of the will, he asserts, are exceedingly valuable and never go unrewarded, yet in themselves they are insufficient when deeds are possible ¹¹⁰). Nevertheless, goodwill, which is the gift of the Holy Spirit, is absolutely essential for progress in the spiritual life ¹¹¹).

¹⁰²) Cf. *De Gestis*, X. xxiii. 623b; XIII. cxx. 884va; XII. iv. 736a and *Evangelii*, III. xii. 401; IV. xiii. 551; I. iii. 12.

¹⁰³) *Ibid.*, XIV. xiii. 912b = *Evangelii*, II. xvii. 222; IV. xvii. 584.

¹⁰⁴) Cf. McNEIL, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

¹⁰⁵) *De Gestis*, IV. ix. 170a; XIV. xiv. 913b. Cf. *Evangelii*, I. xix. 103; IV. xviii. 586.

¹⁰⁶) *Ibid.*, XIII. cxvi. 881rb-vb = *Evangelii*, IV. xiii. 546-7.

¹⁰⁷) *Ibid.*, III. i. 98a = *Evangelii*, I. xv. 71.

¹⁰⁸) It may be pointed out that her unusual distinction between the 'corpo mistico' (priests) and the 'corpo universale della religione cristiana' (laity) was not derived from Simone nor indeed from any of the customary sources.

¹⁰⁹) Cf. *De Gestis*, V. xxiv. 279a; IV. viii. 168a and *Evangelii*, I. iv. 17; II. ix. 168; III. vi. 356; III. ix. 376; III. xii. 401.

¹¹⁰) *Ibid.*, III. i. 97a; III. viii. 164a. Cf. *Evangelii*, I. iv. 17; I. xv. 69; III. i. 314.

¹¹¹) *Ibid.*, XIII. xxv. 789b. Cf. *Evangelii*, I. iv. 17; III. vii. 368; III. viii. 371-2; IV. xii. 481.

Simone also lays great stress on the importance of appreciating the fact that man's will is free. The devil he says 'non à perciò potenza di farci cadere, se la nostra volontà propria non consenta' ¹¹²). Conversely man is equally free to accept or reject God's graces ¹¹³); and hence the choice between merit and loss ultimately depends on the will ¹¹⁴). At the same time, Simone is particularly careful to uphold not only the supereminence of grace but also its gratuitous nature. Phrases such as 'per gratia, non per natura' and 'non per debito, ma per amore' succinctly express his as well as Catherine's teaching ¹¹⁵). But there is one theme in all of Simone's writings which is essential for a proper understanding of his views on grace and nature, one which marks him off as faithful disciple of Augustine and also places him in the same spiritual tradition that formed Catherine's outlook — the contrast between fallen nature before and after the Incarnation.

In the *De Gestis* and its Italian version one meets again, but on a much wider scale, that picture of the corruption and vileness of human nature, resulting from Adam's transgression, which has been noticed already in the *Vita Cristiana*. Beyond all doubt Simone Fidati was deeply engrossed by the spectacle of fallen humanity and his entire doctrine is to a certain extent overcast by the degradation and misery of unredemed man. From this aspect Catherine and himself were products of one and the same school of spirituality. Echoing Augustine, Simone declares that man can claim nothing except sin as his own ¹¹⁶) :

¹¹²) *Evangelii*, III. v. 355 = *De Gestis*, X. xxxiv. 631b. The earliest reference in Catherine's writing to this point is DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XI, 48, 17-19 (= TOMMASEO, 107).

¹¹³) *De Gestis*, XIII. cxi. 874a = *Evangelii*, IV. xii. 538.

¹¹⁴) Cf. *De Gestis*, I. xxvii. 40a and *Evangelii*, II. viii. 166: 'per veruna grazia o vero dono che Cristo dia, all'uomo non toglie il libero arbitrio; ma sempre vuole che sia libero a volere o adoperare co la grazia data l'opere virtuose o a lassarea la grazia e adoperare l'opere vitiose. Perciò che se non fusse libero per lo ben fare non meriterebbe la gloria di vita eterna nè per lo ma fare, le pene de lo 'nferno'.

¹¹⁵) *De Gestis*, I. xxvi. 39b; VII. xiii. 395a; VI. iii. 298a; VI. v. 303b = *Evangelii*, III. viii. 372; III. xii. 398; III. xiv. 408. Cf. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XVII, 62, 16-17 (= TOMMASEO, 28); XVIII, 79, 1 (= TOMMASEO, 29); XXIII, 97, 11-12 (= TOMMASEO, 101); LI, 197, 2-3 (= TOMMASEO, 109); LXXVII, 316, 22 (= TOMMASEO, 235).

¹¹⁶) *Evangelii*, III. xv. 411 = *De Gestis*, VI. vi. 305b. Cf. *ibid.*, IV. i. 129a;

Vendere ogni tua propria cosa si è rinunciare a tutti i tuoi peccati, i quali soli sono di nostra propria ragione. Queste cose solamente sono nostre proprie, cioè peccati, consuetudini ribellioni e contradizioni alla verità e agli piacerimenti sensuali proprii e carnali, volontà e propri consigli e inclinazioni a' mali e mali costumi, che nascono e crescono da quelle.

Against that background of evil and disordination Simone proclaims the glory of the grace of Christ and the nobility that human nature received when God became incarnate. While grace, he says, has conquered 'la natura corotta' it has not destroyed the nature which God created ¹¹⁷):

Sopra natura è la grazia che dispregia la corotta natura e cerca di fare essere noi sopra natura, non confondendo ma aiutando la creata natura.

Moreover, Christ by assuming human nature and uniting it with his divinity conferred on it a far greater dignity than it possessed before the Fall, since in virtue of the Incarnation human nature is endowed with an excellence which surpasses even that of the angels ¹¹⁸).

Though this feature of Simone's teaching cannot be traced in any of Catherine's letters written before the summer of 1374, it appears very clearly twelve months later in her *epistolario* and occupies a prominent place in the *Dialogo* ¹¹⁹). Catherine also agrees with Simone in ranking the power of the priesthood higher than that of angels ¹²⁰) and in teaching that the ordinary faithful can and should become 'angeli terrestri' by doing God's will: 'Vestitevi

VII. vii. 389b. Simone almost invariably uses the term 'damnata propago' where Augustine or Catherine would write: 'massa damnata', or 'massa peccati de Adam' or 'massa d'Adam'.

¹¹⁷) *Evangelii*, II. xxvii. 273 = *De Gestis*, V. xxvii. 256b. Cf. *ibid.*, VI. vi. 305b-6a = *Evangelii*, III. xv. 411.

¹¹⁸) *De Gestis*, I. ii. 5a: 'Attendant homines mortales, quam alte humana natura sublimata est in assumente verbo, ut etiam supergressa sit angelicam dignitatem' (omitted in *Evangelii*).

¹¹⁹) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, L, 191, 20-192, 3 (= TOMMASEO, 257). Cf. *Dialogo*, cx. 267: 'veniste in tanta excellenzia, per l'unione che io (God) feci della Deità mia nella natura umana che in questo avete maggiore excellenzia e dignità voi che l'angelo'.

¹²⁰) *De Gestis*, V. xxxiii. 271 = *Evangelii*, II. xxx. 292. Cf. *Dialogo*, cxiii. 277-8.

della dolce ed eterna volontà di Dio, e a questo modo gustarete vita eterna, e sarete chiamate angeli terrestri in questa vita' ¹²¹).

The fact that evil still apparently flourishes in the world, Simone teaches, cannot be construed as an argument against the infinite goodness of divine providence. Following Augustine, whose principles Catherine adopts, he points out that evil can be attributed only to one source, namely, the perverse will of devils and men. Yet that perversion for which God is in no way responsible, utterly fails to impede the exercise of his goodness because he actually utilises it in order to produce good: 'la divina provvidenza è bonta, la quale sa e può sempre bene usare le male volontà del demonio e di ogni malo uomo' ¹²²).

Before concluding this somewhat cursory survey of the Augustinian ideas which characterise the spiritual teaching both of Simone and Catherine, we may mention one more point. In his magnificent exposition of the gospels the friar repeatedly illustrates the enormity of man's error in seeking rest in unstable and transitory things: 'Ora come può esser requie', he asks, 'dove ogni cosa è in continuo movimento?' ¹²³). Man has been created with a capacity for the Infinite ¹²⁴) and hence only in the vision and possession of God can he achieve his fulfilment ¹²⁵).

To regard either the *De Gestis* or the *Evangelii*, or even both together, as the sole fount of Catherine's Augustinianism would be most uncritical; some of the most striking parallels between the theology of Augustine and Catherine find no place in Simone's works. Nevertheless the amount of Augustinianism in Catherine's early and fundamental writings which cannot be traced in the *De Gestis* and *Evangelii* is comparatively little.

The full value of these works as sources for her doctrine becomes apparent when the area of study is enlarged. Though Simone based the major part of his spiritual teaching on Augustine's own writings he did not neglect other great medieval storehouses of christian thought. There are good grounds for believing that

¹²¹) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, LXII, 261, 1-3 (= TOMMASEO, 75). Cf. *De Gestis*, III, iii. 115b-6a; X. iv. 597a-b; X. xxx. 628b-9a and *Evangelii*, III. v. 345.

¹²²) *Evangelii*, II. xxiii. 253-4 = *De Gestis*, VII. xxiii. 248a.

¹²³) *Ibid.*, III. xix. 433 = *De Gestis*, VI. xi. 313a.

¹²⁴) *De Gestis*, I. xxvii. 40b.

¹²⁵) Cf. *ibid.*, II. ix. 168; III. xv. 409-10; III. ix. 376-7; III. xv. 411; III. xix. 434; and *De Gestis*, VI. vi. 304a; IV. vii. 155b; VI. i. 285b; VI. vi. 305a.

Catherine's knowledge of certain points in St. Bernard's works, for example, was derived from the Italian version of *De Gestis*. Here again we can do no more than offer a brief analysis of this aspect of Catherine's sources.

First of all it is worth mentioning some figures of speech used by Catherine in her earliest letters, which are also to be found in the *De Gestis* and *Evangelii*: the bark or 'navicella' of the soul ¹²⁶; the table of virtues ¹²⁷; the bridge of death ¹²⁸). To these we may add the following which are scattered through her later writings: the comparison between men whose heart is set on earthly things and animals whose food is the earth ¹²⁹; 'la casa dell'anima nostra' ¹³⁰; the 'campo di questo mondo' ¹³¹; returning or ascending to the seat of reason ¹³² the tree of human nature ¹³³; the tree of the soul ¹³⁴; discretion a condiment ¹³⁵; the table of penance ¹³⁶; and God the mirror of the soul ¹³⁷). Writing to Piero Gambacorta of Pisa during the second half of 1374 Catherine speaks of the man whose affections are tied to this world: 'Cosi l'anima

¹²⁶) Cf. *Evangelii*, II. ix. 176 and DUPRÉ THESEIDER, I, 12, 3 (= TOMMASEO, 30); XX, 84, 16-17 (= TOMMASEO, 127). Cf. *ibid.*, XLIV, 179, 17 (= TOMMASEO, 139); LXXXV, 348, 2 (= TOMMASEO, 246); LXXXVII, 354, 11 (= TOMMASEO, 195).

¹²⁷) *De Gestis*, IV. x. 180a; IX. iv. 512b. Cf. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, VI, 30, 13-14 (= TOMMASEO, 208).

¹²⁸) *Evangelii*, II. vii. 158; IV. xii. 538 = *De Gestis*, XIII. cxi. 874a. Cf. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, X, 44, 12-13 (= TOMMASEO, 24). The simile of the pig (*ibid.*, 44, 16 and *Dialogo*, xxxii. 73) also appears in *De Gestis*, V. xvi. 235b (= *Evangelii*, II. xviii. 232) but derives from 2 *Pet.* ii. 22.

¹²⁹) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XXVIII, 116, 7-8 (= TOMMASEO, 88). Cf. *Dialogo*, xxxiii. 74; xlviii. 110; and *De Gestis*, V. xxix. 261b = *Evangelii*, II. xxiv. 258.

¹³⁰) *Ibid.*, XXXIV, 143, 13 (= TOMMASEO, 144). Cf. *Evangelii*, II. xix. 236.

¹³¹) *Ibid.*, XLI, 166, 13 (= TOMMASEO, 138). Cf. *De Gestis*, VI. iii. 298a, 300a and *Evangelii*, III. xii. 398-9. The metaphor goes back to *Matt.* xiii. 38.

¹³²) *Ibid.*, XLII, 170, 19-20 (= TOMMASEO, 135). Cf. *De Gestis*, V. xiii. 215b; V. xiv. 220a = *Evangelii*, II. xv. 198; II. xvi. 207. In the *Dialogo* (lx. 133) Catherine refers to the seat of conscience — a figure of speech derived from AUGUSTINE, *In Joannis Evang.*, tract. XXXIII. vii-viii. 5 (PL xxxv. 1649).

¹³³) *Ibid.*, LIV, 216, 15 (= TOMMASEO, 185). Cf. *De Gestis*, V. xxvii. 254a = *Evangelii*, II. xxv. 260. Simone interprets *Matt.* iii. 10 in this sense.

¹³⁴) *Ibid.*, LXXVIII, 318, 7 (= TOMMASEO, 235). Cf. *ibid.*, LIV, 213, 14; *Dialogo*, xciii. 219; and *De Gestis*, loc. cit.

¹³⁵) *Dialogo*, xi. 31. Cf. *De Gestis*, IV. viii. 163a.

¹³⁶) *Ibid.*, xc. 240. Cf. *Evangelii*, II. v. 152.

¹³⁷) *Ibid.*, xiii. 34-5. Cf. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XXVII, 112, 5-6 (= TOMMASEO, 146) and *De Gestis*, IV. i. 130a.

à legate le mani che non può muovere neuna operatione a Cristo ; ne i piei dell'affetto non si muove a fare veruna buona operatione che sia fondata in gratia' ¹³⁸). The basis of this imagery may well have been Simone's allegorical interpretation of the figure of Lazarus, bound hand and foot, emerging from the tomb ¹³⁹). Catherine also agrees with Simone in interpreting the daughter of the Canaanite woman as the soul ¹⁴⁰). But perhaps the most telling example of their penchant for identical similes or metaphors is their comparison of the Eucharist with the sun ¹⁴¹).

A notable feature of Simone's writings is his use of certain expressions or phrases which are so typical of Catherine's style that they have come to be regarded as more or less peculiar to her mystical language, for example : 'abbondantia del sangue' ¹⁴²) ; 'memoria di questo sangue' ¹⁴³) ; 'continua orazione' ¹⁴⁴) ; 'ogni amaritudine li (the lover) pare dolce' ¹⁴⁵) ; 't'inebria amore, Magdalena !, ¹⁴⁶) ; 'amare quello che Dio ama, odiare quello che Dio odia' ¹⁴⁷) ; 'santo odio e amore' ¹⁴⁸) ; 'questo secolo tene-

¹³⁸) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XXII, 91, 21-92, 3 (= TOMMASEO, 149).

¹³⁹) *De Gestis*, V. xv. 232b = *Evangelii*, II. xvii. 225.

¹⁴⁰) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XXIV, 104, 9 (= TOMMASEO, 69). Cf. *De Gestis*, V. xxiv. 248a-50a = *Evangelii*, II. xxiii. 252-7. As DUPRÉ THESEIDER notes, *loc. cit.*, the allegory ultimately goes back to St Jerome, *Comment in Evang. Matt.* (PL xxvi. 109, not 113 as Dupré Theseider states).

¹⁴¹) Cf. *Dialogo*, cx. 267 and *De Gestis*, XIV. xiii. 913a = *Evangelii*, IV. xvii. 584.

¹⁴²) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, I, 8, 8-9 (= TOMMASEO, 30); VII, 35, 22-3 (= TOMMASEO, 99); IX, 41, 10 (= TOMMASEO, 200); XI, 50, 16 (= TOMMASEO, 107); XVII, 65, 7 (= TOMMASEO, 28); XVIII, 75, 3-4 (= TOMMASEO, 29). Cf. *Evangelii*, IV. xii. 489.

¹⁴³) *Ibid.*, VII, 35, 21-2, 36, 9. Cf. *Evangelii*, III. v. 343.

¹⁴⁴) *Ibid.*, VIII, 39, 10 (= TOMMASEO, 105). Cf. *Evangelii*, I. i. 7; I. xii. 47; I. xix. 106; II. xix. 233.

¹⁴⁵) *Ibid.*, XX, 83, 6-7 (= TOMMASEO, 127). Cf. *ibid.*, XVI, 60, 2-3 (= TOMMASEO, 20); LV, 221, 8-9 (= TOMMASEO, 181); LXXXIV, 345, 19 (= TOMMASEO, 189); and *De Gestis*, XII. iv. 735b.

¹⁴⁶) *Ibid.*, II, 15, 17-18 (= TOMMASEO, 61); LIX, 14 (= TOMMASEO, 165). Cf. *De Gestis*, IX. xxxiv. 567b.

¹⁴⁷) For Catherine's use of this expression see above, where Simone's *Vita Cristiana* is quoted. Cf. also *Evangelii*, III. xvii. 417; IV. viii. 465.

¹⁴⁸) Cf. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, I, 7, 1-2; VII, 35, 18-19; *Dialogo*, xxiii. 54, etc., and *De Gestis*, V. xxiii. 274b = *Evangelii*, II. xxx. 298a. See also *ibid.*, III, xii. 401 and *Vita Cristiana*, I. xi. 161.

broso' ¹⁴⁹), etc. Apart these expressions, which are certainly worthy of note, there is a significant parallel between Simone's and Catherine's treatment of perseverance and ingratitude :

Catherine ¹⁵⁰)

sempre andiate con vera e perfetta perseveranza, che sapete che sola la perseveranza è incoronata.

Simone ¹⁵¹)

e san Bernardo dice : Tutte le virtu correno, ma solo la perseveranza è coronata.

That Catherine borrowed directly from the *Evangelii* and not from *Vitis Mystica* (Simone's source) is most likely. The original quotation reads : 'Quia nimirum virtus boni operis perseverantia est, huic soli redditur corona justitiae' ¹⁵²). But Catherine's dependence on the *Evangelii* is still more evident where she speaks of ingratitude :

Catherine ¹⁵³)

Siate grato e cognoscente, acciò che non si secchi in voi la fonte della pietà.

Simone ¹⁵⁴)

sia grato e conoscente di quel che à ricevuto, perciòchè la ingratitudine è un vento, dice san Bernardo, la quale disicca la fonte de la misericordia e de la pietà.

Though in this particular instance the pseudo-Bernardine *De Charitate* is the source of the quotation in the *Evangelii*, there can be little or no doubt that Catherine used this latter work, since the

¹⁴⁹) *Ibid.*, VII, 35, 18; XVII, 66, 18-19. Cf. *Dialogo*, xxi. 51; xlix. 113; and *De Gestis*, VI. i. 285b-6a = *Evangelii*, III. ix. 376-7. See also *ibid.*, I. xviii. 84.

¹⁵⁰) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XI, 48, 11-13 (= TOMMASEO, 107). Cf. *ibid.*, LII, 204, 8-9 (= GARDNER *St Cath.*, letter I); LIX, 241, 12-13 (= TOMMASEO, 165); and *Dialogo*, lxxvii. 176.

¹⁵¹) *Evangelii*, II. xxvii. 274.

¹⁵²) *Vitis Mystica*, xiv. 47 (PL clxxxiv. 664). This work was once attributed to St Bernard.

¹⁵³) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XVII, 70, 7-8 (= TOMMASEO, 28). Cf. *ibid.*, XX, 83, 17-18 (= TOMMASEO, 127).

¹⁵⁴) *Evangelii*, III. v. 341. Cf. *ibid.*, II. xxix. 287.

corresponding passage in the original lacks the opening words of her statement ¹⁵⁵).

Two other favourite Catherinian sayings which date from the early period of the saint's literary career and which have been attributed to the influence of Cavalca, can be traced in the *De Gestis* and *Evangelii*. According to Catherine it was not the nails — they were insufficient — that held Christ bound to the Cross but his immense love ¹⁵⁶; and elsewhere she declares that his nailed and pierced hand — a symbol of apparent impotence — crushed the power of the devil ¹⁵⁷). Though both of these statements are found in Simone's writings, the second must be treated with reservation, for in a letter of 1377 Catherine ascribes it to Augustine whom Cavalca also names as its author ¹⁵⁸). Simone, on the other hand, makes no such claim. That Cavalca's writings contributed to the formation of Catherine's doctrine is certain; consequently it is most likely that the second of the above declarations was derived from the Dominican's writings or from an Augustinian source other than the *De Gestis* and *Evangelii*. But the moving spirit behind Catherine's whole thought is crystallised in a passage that is exclusively Simone's: 'rendi tutto il tuo amore a tanto divino amore e tutto il sangue per il divin sangue con gran desiderio' ¹⁵⁹).

To round off this rather sketchy study of certain traits of Simone's and Catherine's writings, a word may be said about a few

¹⁵⁵) Cf. Ps. Bernard, *De Charitate*, xix. 63 'Ingratitudo ... est... ventus pestilens, et aura corrumpens stillicidia pietatis, rorem gratiae et misericordiae fluentia desiccans' (PL clxxxiv. 615).

¹⁵⁶) Cf. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, VII, 36, 1-3 (= TOMMASEO, 99); XI, 48, 19-49, 2 (= TOMMASEO, 107); XVII, 69, 12-14 (= TOMMASEO, 28); XVIII, 72, 14-18 (= TOMMASEO, 29); XXIII, 95, 21-2 (= TOMMASEO, 101); XXVI, 109, 24-6 (= TOMMASEO, 142); LXXIII, 301, 26-302, 3 (= TOMMASEO, 241). Cf. *De Gestis*, XIII. cxiii. 878a.

¹⁵⁷) *Ibid.*, XI, 49, 8-9. XVII, 65, 8-9. Cf. *De Gestis*, IV. viii. 165a; V. xxv. 251b = *Evangelii*, II. xxvi. 267. See also *ibid.*, 269.

¹⁵⁸) TOMMASEO, 260 (*Misc.*, iv. 140). For Cavalca, see R. FAWTIER and L. CANET, *La double expérience de Catherine Benincasa* (Paris, 1948), p. 326, and n. 4, citing J. CHUZÉVILLE, *Les mystiques Italiens* (Paris, 1943), p. 189.

¹⁵⁹) *Evangelii*, IV. xiii. 552. Cf. *De Gestis*, XIII. xix. 782; and DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XVII, 69, 16-17: '... dare el sangue per amore del sangue'. See also *ibid.*, XXXIV, 143, 26-7 (= TOMMASEO, 144); LII, 205, 28-9 (= GARDNER, *St. Cath.*, letter I); and TOMMASEO, 186 (*Misc.*, iii. 157): 'coll'amore ricevere l'amore'.

aspects of the Augustinian's teaching which appear to have some significance for the development of her doctrine.

Referring to Mary's role as co-redemptrix Simone states that she suffered most painfully from the knowledge that it was from her that Christ received his flesh and blood and thus she contributed to his agony on the Cross ¹⁶⁰):

perchè ministrò e dette del sangue e della carne sua, della quale fu fatto il corpo di Cristo passibile in tante pene e in crudeli tormenti, avvengachè senza peccato.

This approach may well form the foundation of Catherine's highly personal concept of Mary who, she says, made a ladder of herself in order to place Christ on the Cross: 'El Figliuolo era percosso nel corpo, e la Madre similmente, perché quella carne era di lei ... ella si vuole fare scala', as we read in the letter of 1367 to the Augustinian nuns in Siena ¹⁶¹). In passing, we may also point out that Catherine agrees with Simone in teaching that sin was the cause of Christ's death ¹⁶²).

Writing to her brother Benincasa early in 1373/4 Catherine states that patience is necessary for salvation ¹⁶³), and in her letter to Bernabò Visconti, written about the same time, she describes the loss of grace as 'infinito male' ¹⁶⁴). Here Catherine is contrasting the loss of temporal things which are finite with the loss of grace which is infinite, since it bestows an infinite good; but in the *Dialogo* she reverts to the context of Simone's *De Gestis* on sin as an infinite evil. According to the latter, penitential works of themselves are not sufficient to compensate for sin: they are finite, sin is

¹⁶⁰) *Evangelii*, IV. xiii. 541 = *De Gestis*, XIII. cxiii. 877b. Cf. *ibid.*, II. xxi. 67b.

¹⁶¹) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, I, 7, 4-8, 1 (= TOMMASEO, 30). Cf. *ibid.*, XXXIV, 141, 34-142, 2. In this second letter Catherine attributes the idea to 'dottori' but she does not say who they are. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, *loc. cit.*, 142, n. 6, cites St. Bonaventure and Giordano da Rivalto, but neither of the extracts quoted hits the actual point.

¹⁶²) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XXXVI, 151, 6-7 (= TOMMASEO, 148); LII, 203, 13-14 (= GARDNER, *St. Cath.*, letter I). Cf. *De Gestis*, XIII. c. 858b (omitted in *Evangelii*); and *Rom.* iv. 25; v. 8-9.

¹⁶³) *Ibid.*, XIV, 57, 8-10 (= TOMMASEO, 18). Cf. *De Gestis*, VI. ii. 297a = *Evangelii*, III. xi. 397.

¹⁶⁴) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XVII, 67, 8 (= TOMMASEO, 28).

something infinite ¹⁶⁵). Such, also, is Catherine's reasoning ¹⁶⁶), and she concurs with Simone in teaching that we are rewarded not according to the actual greatness of our works but according to the measure of our love ¹⁶⁷).

Owing to the fact that the *De Gestis* and *Evangelii* incorporate much of the matter of Simone's earlier writings, it is not strange that they should present an extensive treatment of his views on the body and its members as instruments of virtue. He points out once more that bodily penances such as fasting and vigils are not virtuous unless they proceed from the virtue of temperance ¹⁶⁸). Catherine also embodies in her *Dialogo* certain other principles laid down by Simone with regard to works of penance in general.

While fasting is undoubtedly necessary, according to the Augustinian mystic, in order to keep bodily appetites in subjection to the soul and free the mind for prayer, great discretion is necessary lest the health of the body be endangered and prayer and contemplation become impossible. In all matters of physical penance each person's constitution or 'complexion' must be taken into account, and a careful distinction has to be made between 'la cura de la natura' which is good and 'la cura de la volontà carnale' which is blameworthy ¹⁶⁹).

The foregoing outline of Simone's principles reveals to a remarkable degree the basic assumptions of Catherine's ideas on bodily penance ¹⁷⁰), and she also adopts his view on the relationship between discretion as a general virtue and humility, for Simone holds that all indiscretion springs from pride ¹⁷¹), or as we read in the *Dialogo*: 'la quale indiscrezione sarebbe posta nella superbia, come la discrezione è posta nell'umiltà' ¹⁷²).

Simone's reference to 'volontà carnale' calls to mind one of the outstanding points in Catherine's whole doctrine — the repla-

¹⁶⁵) *De Gestis*, III. i. 96b = *Evangelii*, I. xv. 67-8.

¹⁶⁶) Cf. *Dialogo*, iii. 5; xi. 26 sqq.

¹⁶⁷) *De Gestis*, VI. iv. 303a; XIII. iv. 764b = *Evangelii*, IV. viii. 465. Cf. *ibid.*, IV. ii. 456 and *Dialogo*, clxiv. 488-90; clxv. 490-1.

¹⁶⁸) *Ibid.*, III. i. 97a-b; IV. i. 123b; IV. iv. 140a; V. xxv. 252a; VII. xv. 399a. Cf. *Evangelii*, I. xix. 93; II. xxvi. 268. For Catherine's teaching, see above, p. 391.

¹⁶⁹) *Evangelii*, I. xix. 97 = *De Gestis*, IV. iv. 140b-la.

¹⁷⁰) Cf. *Dialogo*, civ. 254-5.

¹⁷¹) *Evangelii*, II. xxi. 244; IV. ix. 475 = *De Gestis*, XIII. xvii. 780b.

¹⁷²) *Dialogo*, ix. 24.

cement of self-love by love of God. In a striking passage in the *De Gestis* Simone enumerates the evils which flow from love of self. He states : 'proprius amor omnem bonitatem exterminat, et omnem malum committit... per crucem ante tribunal divinae iustitiae proprius condemnatur amor' ¹⁷³). The antithesis set forth here between the cross of Christ and self-love actually occurs in the very first letter of Catherine's *epistolario* ¹⁷⁴) and forms a constant feature of her subsequent teaching. In fact it is not unlikely that Simone's understanding of man's 'volontà propria sensuale' forms the foundation of Catherine's doctrine of 'volontà propria sensitiva' ¹⁷⁵). Similarly her treatment of 'volontà propria spirituale' is foreshadowed in Simone's *De Gestis* where he distinguishes between the vice of regulating one's spiritual life in accordance with the dictates of self-will and the vice of self-conceit which derives from either supposed or actually possessed goodness ¹⁷⁶). Speaking of spiritual self-will Catherine mentions those who refuse to disengage themselves from contemplation when their neighbour is in need, their reason being that in such an event they would lose the consolation and virtue of prayer ¹⁷⁷). Though Simone does not classify this attitude under the heading of 'la volontà propria spirituale', he declares, as does Catherine, that charity comes first and that one does not lose the fruit of prayer in such contingencies ; indeed to refuse to help one's neighbour under the pretext of virtue is to lose the virtue of contemplation and prayer ¹⁷⁸). Finally it may be noted that Catherine's concept of self-love as a cloud which prevents the light of God from entering the soul may have some connexion with a passage in the *De Gestis*, which refers to prayer ¹⁷⁹) :

Nubes, radiantis solis ad nos saepe consuevit transitum impedire... Nubes autem, quam deus opponere dicitur ne oratio transeat,

¹⁷³) *De Gestis*, VIII. xxi. 432rb-vb. Cf. *ibid.*, IV. i. 122b = *Evangelii*, I. xiii. 55: 'Barba e cagione de la croce di Cristo fu la volontà propria e sensuale; l'ubbidienza sì la secco'.

¹⁷⁴) Cf. DUPRÉ THESEIDER, I, 7, 18-20 (= TOMMASEO, 30).

¹⁷⁵) Cf. *De Gestis*, IV. iv. 141a; VI. i. 286b; VI. vi. 305b; X. xxxiv. 631b; XIII. cxiii. 876a-b; XIII. cxx. 884vb and *Evangelii*, I. xix. 97; III. i. 304, 308-9; III. v. 345, 355; III. ix. 376; III. xv. 411; IV. xii. 485.

¹⁷⁶) *Ibid.*, XIII. xi. 774b-5a. Cf. *Dialogo*, vi. 16; xcix. 240-1 and *passim*.

¹⁷⁷) *Dialogo*, lxix. 160-2.

¹⁷⁸) *De Gestis*, XIII. xxxvi. 800a = *Evangelii*, IV. xii. 487-8.

¹⁷⁹) *Op. cit.*, XIII. xxxii. 796b.

orantium est sensualis aut retenta voluntas... Nam sicut nubes ex exhalatione terrae atque paludum efficitur, & visibus obstat, ne usque ad superiora lumina usitato more perveniant et luci supernae, ne partibus inferioribus solitis splendoribus fulgeat, sic sensualis aut retenta voluntas surgit ex carne... Nubilosa voluntas est, quae suis directionibus insistit & gaudet, quae in divinae voluntatis se non transtulit claritatem.

It cannot be said that Catherine views self-love or self-will as a cloud which impedes prayer, yet she almost always describes 'amore proprio' as a cloud ¹⁸⁰); and in her letter of 1376 to Flete we find her stating that self-love, on which self-will is based, is an earthly affection ¹⁸¹):

... che noi traiamo l'affetto della casa di questa nostra passione sensitiva terrena, amore proprio di noi medesimi e della terra nostra, cioè che l'affetto si levi da ogni amore terreno.

Now Simone teaches that self-will springs from the flesh like a cloud from the earth, and consequently there is at least a *prima facie* case for holding that his teaching may have influenced Catherine on this vital aspect of her mysticism.

From a doctrinal and linguistic point of view there can be no question as to the very close relationship that exists between the writings of Simone Fidati and Catherine. While it is undeniable that their ideas were shared to some extent by other writers such as Cavalca, it is equally true that Simone's works alone provide the materials for a number of Catherine's most characteristic statements, or rather her singular approach to and treatment of various aspects of christian thought. Of particular importance in this matter is the fact that Lecceto, where Flete lived, was the main centre for the diffusion of Simone's writings. If Catherine was influenced by him — and there can be no reasonable doubt that she was — then it stands to reason that Flete must have been responsible for introducing her to the thought of the great Augustinian mystic of the early *trecento*, since no other member of the order had won her confidence before 1374. At all events the writings of Simone

¹⁸⁰) Cf. *Dialogo*, iv. 7; xlviii. 111; li. 116; lxxxv. 199; clxvii. 502.

¹⁸¹) DUPRÉ THESEIDER, XXXV, 145, 6-9 (= TOMMASEO, 66). Cf. *ibid.*, XLIX, 188, 20-1 (= TOMMASEO, 108).

Fidati deserve to be placed among the really important sources for Catherine's doctrine.

It is also evident that the theological milieu in which she moved and which exercised in human terms the most potent influence on the development of her mystical teaching was not the scholastic world, still less was the setting Thomistic. Her spiritual thought was very much the product of the writings of near-contemporary Italian authors, though ultimately, as far as non-scriptural sources go, Augustine was her master.

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