Chapter XII

HER DEATH

THE events of the last months of 1379 had brought no consolation to Catherine, and 1380 seemed to promise nothing better. At the beginning of the year she had a strange new experience. She wrote to Fra Raimondo da Capua about 'wonderful divine mysteries made manifest to me ever since the Circumcision'. Our curiosity about this is to some extent satisfied by Barduccio Canigiani, Catherine's dearest son during these months in Rome. Living under the same roof, he could hourly observe the effect on her of these 'wonderful mysteries'. The letter he wrote to Sister Caterina Petrobuoni 'in the convent of San Pietro a Monticelli near Florence' shortly after Catherine's death is a poem of filial tenderness. He says that ever since the first day of January, although she had still preserved her usual robust and healthy appearance, she had been unable to swallow any food or to drink even a drop of water, 'so that she was tormented by a most violent thirst and such a great inflammation of the throat that it seemed as if she were breathing out fire'. Barduccio tells us no more, but if we search for the cause of this physical deterioration we find it in her state of moral depression. Catherine had believed her efforts were contributing to ecclesiastical reform and the unity of the Church; she had hoped to make the world better; but the world had not changed, or had become even worse than before. The Caterinati had not formed a compact active group that might have supported her in her mission; the enemies of the Church were more powerful than before; the Urbanite College of Cardinals were, on the whole, no better than the Clementines; Urban VI lacked humility and kindness and showed a thirst for power that could not but perturb Catherine; and he was becoming less and less willing to listen to her counsels. When she looked beyond the

Papal circle she saw that in Europe the peoples were endeavouring in every possible way to free themselves from the Pope's authority; everywhere there was a confusion of ideas and purposes; the souls of men were bewildered and rebellious; the Church, instead of progressing towards the unity and universality that Catherine desired, was more derelict than ever: 'We see her all forsaken', she said, and compared the Bride's loneliness to that of her Bridegroom. Was this the result she had expected, and for which she had suffered and striven so much? Her work seemed to have achieved very little. At the beginning of 1380 it was clear to her that in spite of her excellent intentions and the holiness of her cause she had not succeeded in turning the course of human events into the channel she desired. She reflected gravely on the worthlessness of man and his labour. Yet she must have thought: Can man be considered absolutely worthless? Are his own efforts not needed in the work of salvation? How could God save anyone without man's help? 'Thou, O God, dost not save man without man's help.' Man has therefore a positive and necessary value, and so the Saint can believe, without fear, that she also counts for something on this earth. This belief inspires her with new courage and gives her the authority to turn to God saying: 'Thou hast made me without my help, but Thou hast not saved me without my help'. Hence there must be a constant relation between the creator and the creature, and as creatures are of some worth, however little, in God's eyes, He cannot ignore them. He must accept their desires and hear their prayers. Catherine's prayers now became more imploring. They had always been extremely fervent, but she had often ended them with 'this is what I wish', showing great confidence in herself and in human strength; now she set much less store by her own wishes and implored the divine mercy: 'Eternal God, my love, I cry to Thee today, to have mercy on this world'.

In fact, it was only after the failure of various political and human experiments that she realised the ineffectiveness of her own will, and began to renounce it. If with her ardent eloquence, her example and her activity, employed over many years for the world's good, she had not succeeded in implanting in men the Christian ideal, what could she expect to gain in the future by repeating: 'this is what I desire'? So little by little she destroyed in

herself the assertion of her own will—and this was probably the greatest and most difficult renunciation of her life.

She even began to lose hope of exercising her good influence over Urban VI. He needed advice and guidance; he was energetic, believed in the efficacy of the Saints' intervention, was zealous for the honour of the Church—but he was so hard, harsh and unapproachable that even those who loved him abandoned him. He made enemies on all sides. What could Catherine do for him now? Only pray to God to endow his thoughts and actions with wisdom. Therefore, on this first day of January, tormented by physical and moral sufferings, she implored God to protect the Pope: 'inasmuch as Thou hast given Thy Vicar a manly heart, let it be softened with Thy holy humility; I shall never cease from knocking at the door of Thy kindness, my love, begging that Thou will uplift him. Make manifest in him Thy virtue, so that his manly heart may ever burn with Thy holy desire, and be tempered with humility; and may he proceed in his actions with Thy kindness, charity, purity and wisdom, so that he may draw to himself the whole world. Give him inner knowledge of Thy truth, so that he may know himself in himself, as he has been hitherto, and Thee in himself by Thy grace.'

This prayer does not conceal a sorrowful recognition of the Pope's lack of love; but it shows that this judgment must not remain long in her heart, where charity alone must reign. What better purification can she offer than by giving her own body for the good of others? The Church has dangerous foes: 'O God of supreme mercy, save them; punish their sins in me. Here is my body which I acknowledge as coming from Thee, and I now offer it to Thee; may it be as an anvil for Thy beatings, to atone for their sins.' This offer implies the willing acceptance of still further anguish even at this moment when reflections on the decay of the Church were wringing her heart, and her body was tortured with suffering of all kinds. She remained in this state of physical pain and spiritual apprehension for several weeks, during which she continued actively to work, but with her thoughts concentrating more and more on one single idea, clear and fixed, the idea that the Vicar of Christ was about to be abandoned, and opposed, by all. If this came to pass, would it not spell ruin for the Church? This fixed idea pierced ever more deeply into her mind and heart

and occupied all her thoughts. She tried to escape it in prayer, but the idea returned, more insistent, more powerful, more overwhelming than before. It gave her no peace; she could bear it no longer. She tried to shake it off, but the evil power took possession of her soul and became implacable: 'The Pope is abandoned, the Church is doomed'. Catherine was terrified and grief-stricken. The crisis came on January 29th, when, towards the hour of Vespers, she fell and rolled on the ground, seized with agonising pains. She herself says: 'My heart felt such pain that I tore at my robe and rent it, staggering about in the chapel as if I were out of my mind with the anguish. If anyone had held me still I really think I should have died.' The terrible convulsions were followed by hours of complete collapse; but the idea that the Pope had been abandoned by all obsessed her so much that the next day she felt obliged to beg Barduccio Canigiani to take her into her cell to try to write a letter of advice to the Pope, and one to three Cardinals. After having dictated the first her strength failed her and she could do no more. Possibly her letter to Urban is No. 370 of Tommaseo's edition, which treats of themes and counsels that must have been of supreme importance to her in those days.

Urban's grave faults of character might be the cause of irremediable disasters for the Church; therefore it was her duty to warn him, respectfully and with affection. He was impulsive and hasty, whereas the affairs of the Church required careful deliberation; he was adventurous, whereas the Church needed prudence and wisdom. A really holy Pope, Catherine told him, must be prudent and enlightened like Gregory the Great, whom he must imitate. To make promises, as he did, which he could not maintain, was a mark of irresponsibility and selfishness; he must be 'a really holy Pope' and maintain every promise made: 'and I humbly pray you, prudently to aim at promising always only what you can fully maintain, lest harm, shame and confusion should ensue'. He must not use harsh words, that intimidate men and make enemies; he must learn to know the power of gentleness, through which people can be indissolubly bound to us. Did he think that by ill-treating the Romans he would achieve the supremacy he desired? Instead, he would spread gloom and hatred in their hearts, and on the first possible occasion they would rise against him, causing him much injury and therefore grievous

harm to the Church. She feared this last above all else. A revolt of the Romans against the Pope would gravely injure the Church of Rome and, directly or indirectly, would strengthen the Schismatics and their 'devil's church'. The Romans must be kept faithful by all possible means, and therefore she begged Urban: 'You must also recognise the great need, for yourself and for Holy Church, to keep this people in obedience and awe of Your Holiness, for this is the root and principle of our faith'. He must be friendly with the Banderesi, attend their meetings, interest himself in their plans, be affectionate and affable with them: he must 'prudently bind them with the bond of love'.

These counsels, if they had been accepted, would have spared Urban VI and the Church grave injury, but Catherine foresaw that the Pope would ignore her advice, and that evil days would ensue. The idea that the Pope and the Church might be left abandoned in a wilderness, and the presentiment that grave events were impending, threatening ruin for the Church in the near future, filled her with anguish. Therefore, in spite of her physical infirmity, she insisted on writing to Urban, hoping with her frank speech to avert the impending catastrophe. This letter cost her an indescribable effort, so that as soon as she had dictated it she fell ill again and had a terrifying vision which seemed to invade her soul. She saw devils coming from all sides to assail her, with deafening howls. The vision may have been caused by a feverish memory of the Schismatics who were for her 'devils incarnate'; or, more probably, her whole nervous system, already much shaken by her fear of disaster for the Church, was still more affected by the rumours of possible riots of the Romans against Urban VI. These shocks and agitations gave rise to a vision of such torturing power that she fell into a dead faint, so that her intimates, running to her, believed her dead.

But for her this was a sublime moment of respite, as if it were a necessary compensation for the agitation that the diabolical visions had caused her. She herself described the two conditions with great precision: 'And when I had written to Christ-on-earth I could write no more, such were the pains that racked my body. And after a little, there came such a terror of devils that I was deafened and amazed; it was almost as if they were furious with me, as if I, poor worm, had been the cause of snatching out of

their hands what they had so long possessed in Holy Church. And the terror was so great, and the bodily pain, that I wanted to flee from the cell and enter the chapel, as if the cell contained the reason for my pains. So I arose, and being unable to walk, I leant on my little son Barduccio. But at once I was thrown down, and as I fell it seemed to me as if my soul had left my body—not as when, at other times, my soul had left my body and tasted the food of the immortals, receiving this supreme food together with them; this time my soul was like a thing apart because it seemed no longer to exist in my body. I saw my body as if it had been some other body lying there. And when my soul saw the anguish of my companion I wanted to see whether I could control my body sufficiently to be able to say to him: "Do not fear, little son", and I saw that I could move neither my tongue nor any other member; for it was like a body cut off from life. So I left the body lying there, and my intellect was fixed in the abyss of the Trinity.'

This is a 'doubling' such as we have already seen in the 'Dialogue', but here it is more emphatic; the spirit not only observes the body from which it has parted, but would like to move it, make it speak and act; the attempt is in vain but serves to prove to the Saint that life belongs absolutely to the spirit. Catherine does not linger to consider her own body; she abandons it when she finds it insensible to her desire, and casts herself wholly into union with the Trinity, in which she finds serenity and perfect bliss, for therein the torments and the diabolical visions vanish at once; there is no more agonising suspense or fear; her spirit can soar at will, and her whole being is enfolded in an infinite peace. The earth now seems far, very far away; yet she does not lose all memory of the earth dwellers, and continues to pray for the salvation of the Church and for her disciples. She seems to be filled with the Holy Spirit and rejoices; but very soon, in some mysterious way, she finds herself once more linked to earthly life, and at once her body begins to breathe again. She has re-entered the world of suffering and sin; the devils reappear, the terror of impending disasters wrings her heart anew, and she sighs out her soul in prayers. From now onwards it is a continual alternation of divine with diabolical moments: the tortures end in sweetness which changes again to fearful visions. This continues for forty-

eight hours, while she lies unconscious. Afterwards, worn out, she returns to herself. Her disciples, however, hardly recognise her; on her face is the impress of the other world.

It was probably at this time that Catherine uttered the prayer: 'O God eternal, O good Master!' The chief requests in this prayer are the same as those Catherine utters in her letter of February 15th, sent to Fra Raimondo da Capua; she prays that the Church may be reformed, protected and victorious, and that her disciples may be enlightened with wisdom, so as to become more perfect and remain in union with each other and with her. In the letter we have also God's reply, which grants her request. Besides reassuring her about the future of the Church and of the Caterinati, God declares that even if the Pope is lacking in self-control he can still discharge the duty of his office; that is, he can sweep out of the Church the elements that make her impure. Urban's roughness and intransigence may even serve this end. Nevertheless, she feels it her duty to warn the Pope to 'be peaceful and grant peace to whoever is willing to receive it'. It is for the Cardinals to make amends for the Pope's defect, so that 'they may all unite together and be like a cloak to cover their father's faulty behaviour'.

But the thought that Rome was about to rebel against the Pope returned insistently to Catherine's mind and made her suffer. On February 2nd she had a most vivid presentiment of the rebellion, and soon afterwards, in fact, rioting broke out. We do not know details about this revolt, because the descriptions we find in Gobelinus, and later in Raynaldus, are partly derived from Fra Raimondo's 'Legend', and partly invented. We do not even know up to what point the worthy Dominican is telling the truth; he was not present at the insurrection and says he got all his information from Catherine. But if so, in which letter? In letter 373 of Tommaseo's edition, or in another, that has been lost? This cannot be ascertained precisely but it seems probable that Fra Raimondo amplified the account Catherine had given him in her letter of February 15th. Certain sentences in the 'Legend', however, are very perplexing. Fra Raimondo's imagination may have transformed the vision of the devils who filled Catherine's cell so that he makes her say: 'I saw in the spirit the whole city full of devils'. This is understandable, but he could hardly have written: 'the populace openly threatened to put the Pope to death' unless

he had been informed of this by Catherine herself in a letter which has not come down to us—for the letter of February 15th makes no mention of this. We know that there were riots against Urban in Rome in February 1380. Catherine asserts this, and it may be deduced that they were the cause of the change of government which took place in Rome on March 1st, and which is reported by Cristoforo da Piacenza. We do not know whether it was a popular rebellion, or a revolt of the Banderesi against the Pope, or an insurrection stirred up by the Clementines. Probably some Roman Clementines may have taken part in the rebellion, but it was chiefly a popular movement led by the Banderesi. The Roman people thought they were badly governed—there was, for example, a scarcity of corn in the city and they had too many rulers—'*tot capita*'—and wanted to elect a Tribune instead of the Banderesi. These latter disagreed with each other and with the Pope, whose interferences in the government of the city infuriated them. Urban opposed the people's intention to elect a Tribune, and wanted the Banderesi to remain, but to be subordinate to himself. He quelled the insurrection and then imposed the dictatorship of two men: Giovanni Cenci, the conqueror of Castel Sant'Angelo, who was perhaps the candidate supported by Catherine, and Nuzio Negri, proposed by Cenci. The Pope gave them full authority to govern Rome; it was a purely nominal authority because, in actual fact, he allowed the two dictators to do nothing without his approval.

The revolt was a grave blow for the Saint, although she had foreseen it. It might mean disaster for the Church; therefore she must intervene without delay. Although physically exhausted, she gathered all her energies together to fight in support of Urban VI. She may even have gone among the rebels to persuade them to stop threatening Christ's Vicar. No document attests this, but we know she had the courage and strength of mind so to do if she thought it necessary. We do know that she prayed to God with continual sighs and tears, imploring Him to make peace between the Pope and the Romans; nor did she cease from praying till she had the inner certainty that all would end peacefully. On February 15th she wrote: 'God has placed His healing ointment on their hearts (the Romans') and I think that the revolt will end satisfactorily'. The ointment was the fruit of her prayers and of the

spiritual battle she had fought, the worst she had ever known, against the devils who wanted to tear her to pieces.

Victory was won for the Church, but what price was Catherine to pay for it? 'I was to hear Mass every morning at dawn, which you know is impossible for me.' She could no longer walk. But she added blithely and sturdily: 'In obedience to God, all is possible'. In fact she began to rise every morning at dawn to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion. 'After the Communion', wrote Barduccio Canigiani, 'she rose from the ground in such a state that whoever had seen her would have thought her dead, and in this condition dragged herself back to her wretched couch. One or two hours later she rose again and we went to the Church of San Pietro, although this was more than a mile away, and there she began to pray, and stayed thus till Vespers, and finally returned home so worn out that she looked as if she were dead.'

Catherine's life, from then on, was one long agonising expectation. 'My life is spent, and all poured out for this sweet Bride' (the Church). Her task was now to sacrifice herself even more than before for the sake of her fellows. She was ready to endure any martyrdom that might further the salvation of the Papacy; she subdued her body to an incredible extent. Every day she passed long hours in San Pietro, hours of poignant appeal, of bitter weeping. God, speaking to her soul immediately after the diabolical vision, had reassured her about the future of the Church; nevertheless, her fear still persisted and caused her to multiply her prayers and sighs. On her daily toilsome walk to San Pietro, supported by Barduccio Canigiani, she often paused to contemplate a great mosaic by Giotto, set like a symbol of encouragement, over the façade of the Basilica.

In this mosaic the 'navicella', a little ship, floating in a stormy sea, captivates the observer's imagination. Catherine, concerned as she was over the threats to the Church's existence, found in this little ship an image that corresponded to her thought—and very soon there formed in her mind a vision in which she herself and the little ship and the Church all took part. She pondered over this vision until the symbols slowly faded and the little ship became a live thing struggling in stormy seas; it was the Church of her own times, about to suffer shipwreck. She wanted to save it, but her strength failed her. Her anguish increased; the little

ship seemed to move towards her; she felt its weight now on her shoulders, a monstrous weight that grew and grew. Whatever could she, poor wretched little woman, do to support it? She wanted to uphold it in some way, at least for a moment, but her strength was exhausted. She felt weighed down. All her energies, even her last desperate reserves, were powerless; her efforts were in vain. She knew she could do no more. Not wishing to fall under this weight, she tried to resist, at least to remain upright, but it was useless. The little ship, overburdened with troubles, became still heavier; her strength was broken; she fell to the ground, crushed under the unbearable burden, and died.

This melancholy vision warned her of her approaching death, and shows us how intensely she felt concerned with the future of the Church. In the long letter she sent to Fra Raimondo da Capua on February 15th, she had found the strength to make a full report to the man who was father and son to her, master and disciple, about the painful and supreme experiences she had undergone from the first day of the year until the moment she dictated the letter. We have already recounted these experiences; the letter contains also some loving advice, and is tinged with wistfulness. She says: 'Amid these torments, through my own ingratitude I am deprived of the comfort of having my spiritual Father with me.' If Fra Raimondo had been with her in those moments, how willingly would she have poured out to him the story of her ordeals and visions, and with what joy received his words of understanding and consolation! But he was far away, and she could only think of him lovingly and write over and over again: 'Most sweet Father', as if to express to him all the tenderness of her motherly heart. As a last instance of her sublime love for him she gave him advice and a warning. She knew that in the next non-Schismatic Dominican Chapter, to be held in Bologna, Fra Raimondo would be elected General of the Order, and she wished to warn him so that, from now onwards, he might prepare himself to assume his new and grave responsibilities, and become capable of bearing with courage all possible future sufferings. She knew he was easy-going and timid. He must banish all self-love and all timidity; he was needed to defend Christ's cause, and for this heroism was required. He was also given to talking too much; she warned him: 'Be cautious in conversation', and, the better to

make him remember this, she repeated: 'Shun idle and careless talk; be, and show yourself to be, mature in speech as in all else'.

She wanted him to be a great Christian, a man of prayer, and compact of all the virtues. Finally, to show him the trust she placed in him, she chose him to be one of the guardians of her Book, in which, as we have seen, she had poured forth all the best in herself. She appointed four guardians of the Book: Fra Raimondo, Fra Bartolomeo Dominici, Fra Tommaso della Fonte, and Fra Giovanni Terzo, the earliest, the wisest and the most loved of her confessors and teachers. This proves the importance she attached to the 'Dialogue', and her conviction that it was worthy to be preserved, read, approved and divulged by experienced theologians.

Then her thoughts turned to her Caterinati. She had already presented and recommended them to God, begging Him to protect them, but, apart from this divine help, they needed on earth someone to keep them united, to encourage them in affliction, to advise them, and from time to time to revive their faith and love. Who could do this better than Fra Raimondo? 'I beg you also, to be a father and ruler of this Family, in so far as lies in your power, and as a father to keep them in charity and perfect union, so that they may neither be nor remain like little sheep without a shepherd. And I believe I shall be able to do more for them and for you, after my death, than I could do during my whole life.'

Catherine feels and knows that her life approaches its end. Her fastings, sufferings, physical disabilities, terrors and constant tears and sighs had visibly worn out her body. On February 26th she lost the use of her legs and was obliged to remain stretched out on a bed that, according to Bartolomeo Dominici, looked like a tomb. A very narrow straw mattress rested on some boards of wood that formed the bottom of the bed, and all around, following the outline of her body, were wooden sides, that rose to a height above the mattress. Inside this Catherine had to lie quite still, because the slightest change in her position, or attempt to raise her head, gave her atrocious pain. Even in this enforced immobility she suffered pain. Yet her eyes remained clear and serene, and no word of complaint ever issued from her lips; indeed, when she was in pain 'from the soles of her feet to the top of her head' she was heard to utter passionate thanks to God.

Tommaso Petra, Pope Urban's Secretary and a disciple of Catherine's, begged her on March 16th, when her condition was obviously worsening, to transmit to her disciples a spiritual testament. At first Catherine hesitated, then, calling her children and disciples around her, she tried to sum up for them the central themes of her spiritual teaching, the fruit of her ardent religious experience, all that might serve to make them more like herself. It was a sermon which, at least when read in the form in which it has come down to us today, does not excite our admiration. It lacks the inner warmth and the spiritual framework of the letters and the 'Dialogue'; it is like scattered limbs of a lifeless body. The reason may easily be understood. She was at that moment speaking with a great effort and in so faint a voice that many of her words were inaudible. Her listeners had, later on, to piece together these broken phrases and hasty notes and attribute to them a meaning which had to be in accordance with the Saint's teaching, or at least with that part of it with which they themselves were most familiar.

This sermon may strike us as somewhat cold and ineffective, but it must nevertheless have had a great influence over those disciples who heard it. The expression on Catherine's face was sublime, and the silences that separated phrase from phrase and word from word, and sometimes even syllable from syllable, must have been fraught with mystery and suspense for her expectant disciples. The stillness of Catherine's body gave her an appearance of hieratic authority; the thought of her approaching death invested with solemnity her slightest movement and faintest sound. Love irradiated from her and streamed over her disciples, exalting them even in their grief. Her sons and daughters watched with awestruck wonder their Mother's every act, and her words acquired supernatural significance because of the joyful emotion in their hearts.

Although Catherine was now living almost entirely in her own inner world, she was always delighted when one of her spiritual sons came to see her. On the evening of March 24th Bartolomeo Dominici came to Rome from Siena. He had come on business for the Dominican Order, without knowing of Catherine's grave illness. He felt a pang of the heart when he heard of her state, and grieved to see her reduced to skin and bones, and looking as if,

physically, she were already a stranger to this world. He went to her, and anxiously asked her how she felt. After some moments she seemed to awake from her torpor; she opened her eyes, which were smiling. She wanted to speak, but could only make a very slight movement with her lips. Fra Bartolomeo set his ear to her mouth, the better to hear what she said; the murmur was very faint, more like breathing than speech. With an effort of attention, and all his good will, he at last succeeded in understanding something; then they were agreed: the next morning would be Easter Sunday and Fra Bartolomeo would say Mass there, at her bedside, and Catherine, to her great joy, would receive Holy Communion.

The next day, as had been arranged, Fra Bartolomeo came; he heard Catherine's confession as best he could, and gave her absolution, but he despaired of being able to give her Communion because of her absolute immobility. But when the moment for her Communion came, to the astonishment of Fra Bartolomeo and all who were present at the Mass, the Saint arose from her bed and walked steadily to the altar. She received the Communion in two kinds, and was at once rapt in an ecstasy, as had always happened before. When she came to herself her strength deserted her and she would have fallen to the ground if her friends had not caught her and carried her back to her bed, where she returned to her former immobility.

Shortly afterwards she gave Fra Bartolomeo one more proof of her strong will. The Friar was bound to return to Siena but did not want to leave his Mother in that state, and told her so. Catherine, in spite of her grief at parting with her great friend, ordered him to return at once to Siena, where his duties as Prior awaited him, and where he must also prepare to take his part in the General Chapter of the Order, soon to be held at Bologna, where he was to vote for the election of Fra Raimondo as General. Her order was explicit, and Fra Bartolomeo showed himself willing to obey on condition that, as he told Catherine, God would give His consent, that is, would make Catherine visibly recover her health. The next day, when he went to see her, he found her 'merry and bright' as in times past. Could he have had a more evident proof of God's will regarding himself? He set out at once for Siena.

A few days after Bartolomeo's departure there came Stefano

Maconi, the disciple whom Catherine had insistently invited to come to her, and who, for family reasons, had not been able to leave Siena before. As soon as the Saint saw him her angelic smile returned, the smile that won all hearts. In those days her longing to have Maconi with her had been so intense that he had heard her call, while he was at prayer in the Scala Hospital in Siena. A voice had said: 'Go to Rome where your Mother is dying'. He had set out forthwith, and arrived in time to be with her during her last days on earth.

Catherine's body was visibly becoming a skeleton, and all her strength was gone. She knew the end was very near. The crisis began about two hours before the dawn of April 29th. Her faithful gathered around her bed. She begged for absolution from guilt and punishment, and this was immediately granted. She fell into a state of torpor during which her only sign of life was 'a continual sad and faint sighing'. It was thought necessary to give her extreme unction, and the Abbot of Sant'Antimo administered the holy rite. Shortly afterwards her face began to be clouded over and she waved her arms about, an evident sign of an inner struggle. Had she sinister visions, or were the devils returning to attack? Her disciples watched every gesture in anxious suspense; they would have wished to know the mysterious cause of her suffering, to be able to help her, but no word came. Three-quarters of an hour passed. At last the Saint spoke: '*Peccavi, Domine, miserere mei*'. She repeated this again and again. 'And I believe she repeated this more than sixty times, each time raising her right arm and then letting it fall, jarring her bed', Barduccio Canigiani tells us in his affecting account. Then the formula changed, became: '*Sancte Deus, miserere mei*', and this too was repeated many times. What was taking place in her soul? Her disciples still waited in fear and trembling.

Perhaps she was reviewing all her past life, or perhaps it was one more fierce struggle with herself? The rapid changes that could be seen in her features showed some dramatic struggle within. She may have been tormented by the knowledge of her failure to reform the Church and to proclaim a new Crusade against the infidels; she may have been accusing herself of having desired too much; she may have thought she had often acted for the sake of self-glorification. According to Raimondo da Capua,

this last thought was a source of great sadness to Catherine towards the end of her life, and when she lay dying she was obsessed by inner voices that accused her of vainglory. She resisted these voices with all the strength of her soul. At last she cried out emphatically :'Never for vainglory, always for the true glory and praise of God'. This was like the trumpet cry of conclusive victory. Her weeping ceased and her face became serene. Her eyes, that had been dimmed with tears, became lively and clear once more. The marks of the battle she had fought were smoothed away. All her children around her felt their hearts rejoice: she was their Mother once more, serene even in sadness, transparent of face and thought even in her sorrows.

Alessia, her faithful fellow Tertiary and friend, who was holding the Saint's head in her lap, now helped her to raise herself to a sitting posture, leaning back in her arms. So, surrounded by the delicate affection and concern of her spiritual children, Catherine fixed her gaze on a crucifix, in the centre of a little tablet, covered with relics and images of the Saints, that had been given to her. Looking at Christ, she uttered a prayer of contrition to the Holy Trinity. Then she blamed herself for not having sufficiently accomplished her duty of saving souls, and asked Christ for complete absolution of sins confessed or forgotten. After having received plenary absolution a second time, according to the privileges granted her by Popes Gregory XI and Urban VI, she prayed again, and spoke, but her disciples could only hear a word here and there.

Then she turned to those of her children who had not been there to hear her last sermon, and indicated to them the way they should follow, after her death. Amongst these was Stefano Maconi, and she turned to him, pointing with her finger, saying: 'I command you in God's name, and by virtue of holy obedience, to enter the Carthusian Order, for God has called and chosen you for that Order'.

It was her last act. She said some more kind words to Barduccio, asked for a blessing from her mother Lapa, who knelt down beside her daughter imploring to be blessed by her, and to receive grace from her. Then she prayed for the universal Church and re-affirmed the legitimacy of Urban VI.

All her children around her bed were sobbing with emotion.

The atmosphere was suffused with love. There were moments of solemn silence and painful anxious suspense. Suddenly the word 'Blood' rang out twice in the silence. It was like a stroke of lightning that flashed through the room. Catherine had put into this word her whole life of love and sacrifice, and while its last echoes sank into the silence, the Saint's last breath rose to God.

It was the sixth hour of the Sunday before the Ascension, the 29th April, 1380.

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Abbreviations used:

BS	Bulletino Senese di Storia Patria.
MAH	Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire.
RMD	Rosario—Memorie Domenicane.
MD	Memorie Domenicane.
SC	Studi Cateriniani.
VC	Vita Cristiana.
SCS	Santa Caterina da Siena.
AD	Année Dominicaine.

I

LIFE

(a) *Historical Sources.*

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WORKS

I. *Lettere*

(a) *MSS.*

Dupré-Theseider has studied 55 MSS. of the Lettere, and considers 27 of these to be genuine collections, to be grouped under three names:
(1) Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi.
(2) Stefano di Corrado Maconi.
(3) Fra Tommaso di Antonio, commonly called Caffarini.
The first two groups are by far the most important.

(1) The Palatine MS 3514, National Library, Vienna, was discovered by Dupré-Theseider, who asserts its 'exceptional importance'; the Magliabechiano XXXVIII, 130, National Library, Florence, is 'the oldest MS. of the Lettere of which we have certain knowledge'; the Magliabechiano XXXV, 199, is 'most interesting and of fundamental importance'.

(2) The most important are: MS. A.D. XIII 34, Braidense Library, Milan; the Varia MS. 155 Royal Library, Turin; the Palatino 57, National Library, Florence, which 'deserves great attention for the accuracy of the text'; the MS. 292, Casanatense Library, Rome, which 'deserves the same consideration as the Viennese MS. and the two Magliabechiani MSS. of Florence'.

(b) *Printed editions*

1942 Epistole utile e devote della beata e serafica vergine S.C. etc. [31 letters—defective text]. Printed by Zohanne Jacomo de Fontanesi. Bologna.
1500 Epistolae devotissime di S. C. da S. etc. (353 letters). Collected by *Fra Bartholomeo* de Alzano da Bergamo, edited by Aldo Manuzio.
This edition was printed three times in Venice 1548, 1562, 1564. In the 18th century *G. Gigli*, with the co-operation of the Jesuit *Burlamacchi*, produced a new edition. One vol., no. III of the Opere, was published in Siena at the printing press of Francesco Quinza, 1713. Another vol., no. II of the Opere, was published at Lucca by *Leonardo Venturini*.
1842-1844 Reprint by *Sorio* of Gigli's ed. in Biblioteca Ecclesiastica (Incomplete).
1860 *Lettere* edited by *Niccolò Tommaseo*. Barbera—Florence.
1913 Tommaseo edition re-publ. by *Misciatelli*. Ed. by Giuntini and Bentivoglio. Five vols. Siena 1925 Vol. VI added to Misciatelli's Lettere, containing Letters discovered by Motzo and Gardner, and Letters of the Disciples, already publ. by *Grottanelli* (Bologna 1863). Whole edition re-publ. by *Marzocco* (Florence 1939-1940).
1918-1930 Lettere di S. C. da S. vergine e domenicana ed. *Padre Lodovico Ferretti, O.P.* (Siena).
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(c) *English translation*

V. D. Scudder: Letters of St Catherine of Siena. Dent. (London 1905)

II. *The Dialogo*

(a) The most important MSS. are the Senese T.II, 9 of the Bibl. Comunale, Siena; the Casanatense MS. 292 of the Bibl. Casanatense, Rome; the Estense T.5 of the Bibl. of Modena.

(b) *Printed editions*

1472 *Baldassare Azzaguidi*. Publ. Bologna.
1478 *Francesco di Dino, Bernardo de Dacia, Wernerus Raptor and Conradus Bonebach*. Printers in Naples.
1483, 1494 *Mattheo Codeca da Parma*. Venice.
1496 *Bernardino de Misintri di Pavia*. Brescia.
The 16th century saw numerous editions: 1511 Ferrara, 1517, 1540, 1547, 1579, 1589 Venice.
1611 *Sarzina* edition, Venice.
1707 *G. Gigli*. Vol. IV of Opere. Siena.
1912 *Fiorilli*. Bari. 2nd ed. revised by Caramella 1928.
1928 *I. Taurisano*. Florence.
1937 *Puccetti*. Siena.
1946 *Rovasenda*. Dialogo della Divina Providenza. Turin.
1947 *Taurisano*. Dialogo. Rome.

(c) *English Translations* of the Dialogo

Dane James: Publ. Wynkyn de Worde (London 1519). Called 'The Orchade of Syon'; it is a translation of a Latin translation.

A. Thorold: ed. Kegan and Paul (London 1896, 1906).

III. *The Preghiere*

The Preghiere exist in Italian and Latin. Codex Senese T.II 7, and codex viennese palatino 3514 discovered by Dupré-Theseidér. First printed edition Brescia 1496.

I. Taurisano: Preghiere ed Elevazioni di S. C. da S. (Rome 1920, 1932).

The Bibliography at the end of Arrigo Levasti's 'Santa Caterina da Siena' contains further detailed information under the headings: St C.'s Disciples, Poetry inspired by St C. in her own life-time, Anthologies of St C.'s works, Analyses of Codices and Texts, Language and Style, Theology, The Ascetic and Mystic, Comparisons, and Various Studies.