

# Catherine of Siena's Humanism: A Tale of Two Cities

*Catherine Joseph Droste*  
*Professor of Theology*  
*Pontifical University of St. Thomas*  
*(Angelicum), Rome*

## Introduction

In considering the Dominican contribution to “freedom, virtue, and the good society,” Catherine of Siena may not be the first figure who comes to mind. An uneducated young woman born in 1347 in Siena, Catherine grew up breathing Dominican air. Her family home stands in the shadow of the Church of San Domenico. Her first confessor was her Dominican cousin, Tommaso della Fonte. At the age of sixteen she joined the Dominican order as a member of the Mantellata or Sisters of Penance, a group of women who took vows, wore the habit of the order, shared in an apostolate to the poor and sick, and though some lived in community, others, like Catherine, lived at home.

Catherine was a saint, a doctor of the Church, a mystic, a reformer, and was sent into public ministry by the Lord himself. A group of followers, both men and women, soon gathered around her, and after she arbitrated peace between warring noble Sienese families, her reputation spread beyond her hometown. By the age of twenty-five she was acting as an ambassador between Tuscan cities and the papacy, and she actively urged Pope Gregory XI, both during a visit to Avignon and in personal letters, to call a crusade; to return the papacy to Rome; and to begin a general reform of the Church. Her legacy includes her prayers; the *Dialogue*, or as Catherine called it, “the Book”—a dictated conversation between herself and God the Father; and almost four hundred extant letters written to people at every level of society, including popes, cardinals, and civil leaders.

The intensity of Catherine's life of prayer and penance, coupled with her accomplishments in the Church and beyond has led many to consider her somewhat untouchable, or to use the words of Pope John Paul II, a "towering peak."<sup>1</sup> Some people are afraid of heights. Unlike the attraction people feel for saints such as Francis of Assisi or Thérèse of Lisieux, Catherine, as her biographer Johannes Jorgenson claims, inspires something of fear. Jorgenson confesses that "in the energetic nature of the Sienese saint there is somewhat of a domineering spirit, an element of tyranny" that he at first considered repugnant.<sup>2</sup> Regardless of one's initial reaction, throughout the centuries, thousands of men and women, rich and poor, old and young, religious and secular, including Jorgenson himself, have fallen under Catherine's spell.

What does this Dominican woman have to contribute to a twenty-first-century discussion of freedom, virtue, justice, and the good society? First, Catherine's life and writings reveal a profound understanding of the nature of a good society, whether secular or ecclesial, and she argues that such societies require both virtuous leaders and members. In this context Catherine introduces the image of two cities: the first city is that of the individual human soul, which God allows each person to rule in freedom. Some people, however, are also given—or, as Catherine says, "lent"—the rule of a second city for a time. These are political and ecclesial leaders who govern cities, states, dioceses, or even the universal Church. Although I will return to this point at the end of this article, the majority of this discussion is dedicated to a more fundamental contribution of Catherine, a principle underlying virtue, freedom, and good society—her teaching on the human person as a creature created and redeemed in mercy.

Great literature provides innumerable examples of how a well-chosen antagonist can be the best instrument for revealing the genius of the protagonist. Consider Iago versus Othello, Achilles versus Hector, or Sauron versus Frodo Baggins. For this exposition on Catherine, I have selected a less dramatic figure, the nineteenth-century philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach. My rationale is twofold: first, both Feuerbach and Catherine make statements on God and man that sound oddly similar, though their underlying principles and conclusion are diametrically opposed; second, Feuerbach's and Catherine's positions and conflicts in anthropology are alive and well for Christians in today's secular society.

## The Antagonist

Feuerbach once stated that all of his writings "have had, strictly speaking, one purpose, one intention, one theme. This is nothing less than religion and theology and whatever is connected to them."<sup>3</sup> The statement cannot be taken at face

value since Feuerbach redefines not only religion and theology, but also faith and love, with drastic consequences for God and man. One grasps something of the problem when you consider that Feuerbach's greatest desire was to change "theologians into anthropologists," "to transform the friends of God into friends of man, believers into thinkers ... Christians who, by their own profession are half-animal, half-angel, into men, into whole men."<sup>4</sup>

## God versus Man

Feuerbach attempts to do just this in his *Essence of Christianity*. He begins by distinguishing the human person from all other creatures. Man's distinctiveness lies in his consciousness, his ability not only to know himself as self but also to know the species, human nature. Feuerbach proposes that man's consciousness leads him to discover within the roots of his own nature an innate desire for the infinite. This desire has driven man throughout history to try to discover that which will satisfy it. The Church and Catherine, too, speak of an infinite desire written in the human heart.<sup>5</sup> But they disagree with Feuerbach on the object of this desire: For the Church, man's desire is fulfilled by the ultimate truth of God himself; for Feuerbach the object is infinite "human nature."

Feuerbach admits to an immediate problem: primitive man in his naiveté was destined for frustration. He searched in vain for fulfillment, but failing to discover the true infinite, his desire remained unfulfilled, and so man did the only thing possible: He "created" God. This religion, born of necessity, Feuerbach describes as "man's earliest and also indirect form of self-knowledge."<sup>6</sup> Though primitive religion served to distinguish man from the brute, it nevertheless enslaved him in a "childlike condition of humanity."<sup>7</sup>

The detrimental effects of this God-illusion do not end here, since by unconsciously creating the infinite, all-powerful God outside of himself, primitive man necessarily negated the infinitude of his own nature. To create the all-powerful, man had to place himself in a situation of powerlessness. As Feuerbach succinctly states: "that God may be all, man must be nothing."<sup>8</sup>

## The Birth of Religious Humanism

How does man move beyond his primitive naiveté, since without full consciousness he obviously cannot save himself? Feuerbach demands that reason step in and "destroy" the illusion, thereby aiding man in the rediscovery of his own infinity. Reason must show man that the faith he has placed in God is merely a misplaced faith; reason reveals that man has erred if he places faith in a god

that is either outside of himself (a pagan error), or above himself (the Christian error). Only the god discovered within himself will answer his desire. Man must say *no* to God so that he can thereby say *yes* to man.<sup>9</sup>

Leaving behind illogical faith and “common” theology which set up God in opposition to man, modern man achieves true religion. Man leaps to maturity, a full self-consciousness whereby he realizes that the infinite he seeks is nothing less than the “consciousness which man has of his own—not finite and limited, but infinite nature.”<sup>10</sup> *True* religion reveals “the infinity of the consciousness”<sup>11</sup>; it awakens his consciousness to believe “in nothing else than the truth and divinity of human nature.”<sup>12</sup> The mature man “worships man,” not in himself as an individual, “but in his essential nature, his species.”<sup>13</sup>

The fundamental stages of Feuerbach’s atheistic humanism can be summarized as follows:

1. Man searches for the infinite; not finding it, he creates God.
2. By creating God this childish religion necessarily negates man.
3. As he matures, man understands that the God he created is really man! The God he worshiped is his own humanity! God = man.
4. Therefore, to worship the divine human nature, reason must destroy the created God, so that man can worship the true divinity of human nature.

## Enter Catherine of Siena

At first glance, the young Sienese mystic, who lived some five hundred years prior to Feuerbach, merely affirms his claims. Catherine’s life and writings make her a prime example of Feuerbach’s theory: the childish faith of one influenced by her family and representatives of the Church, who themselves had succumbed to the illusion of primitive faith. The intensity of Catherine’s desire, following Feuerbach’s analysis, triggers imagined visions of God the Father, Christ, and the saints, as well as mystical experiences such as the exchange of hearts and reception of the stigmata, to name only a few.

During one such vision the Lord presented Catherine with a teaching that would become the foundation of her anthropology. Raymond of Capua, a confessor assigned to Catherine by the Master of the Dominican order in 1374, recounts the story as told to him by Catherine. Many years earlier, when the Lord had just begun to appear to her, Christ came and posed a question to the young woman: “Do you know, daughter, who you are, and who I am?” Without awaiting her

response he told her, "You are she who is not; whereas I am He who is."<sup>14</sup> That is—you, as a human being, are nothing, but I, God, am infinite—existence itself.

Christ's words could be read as further validation of everything Feuerbach criticized in theology, faith, and religion. Man/Catherine, seeking the infinite, hears "God" speak to her, but his words were in reality her own consciousness, seeking to rectify the errors of "theology." Catherine's hallucination was a call to the truth that her belief in the infinite God who *is*, necessarily requires the destruction of humanity—the she who *is not*.

If Feuerbach had read Catherine, he might have been surprised to discover eerie similarities between his own analysis of the illusion and the writings of the saint. Consider Feuerbach's exposition on man's created illusion, the anthropomorphized "God":

God is not what man is—man is not what God is. God is the infinite, man the finite being; God is perfect, man imperfect; God eternal, man temporal; God almighty, man weak; God holy, man sinful. God and man are extremes: God is the absolutely positive, the sum of all realities; man the absolutely negative, comprehending all negations.<sup>15</sup>

Compare this with a prayer of Catherine:

You eternal Godhead are life and I am death. You are wisdom and I am ignorance. You are light and I am darkness. You are infinite and I am finite. You are absolute directness and I am rotten twistedness. You are the doctor and I am sick. You are the purest beauty and I am the filthiest of creatures.<sup>16</sup>

Catherine affirms an antithesis between God and man, but in contrast to Feuerbach's radical opposition in an *a priori* claim that the existence of an infinite God necessarily destroys man's nature (i.e., either God exists and man does not or man exists and God does not), she discovers at the heart of this antithesis the fulfillment and finality of human nature, rooted in the intimate relation between the creature and Creator.<sup>17</sup>

## Created in Mercy

But how can we avoid a Feuerbachian interpretation of Catherine's *she who is not*? Only by first grasping the truth of *He who is*. The phrase hearkens back to the God who reveals himself to Moses in the burning bush as "I am," the God who "is" before time began. God is the Creator who made the world, including

man, from nothing. God's eternity does not necessitate nor imply the annihilation of man, for it corresponds to man's inability to create himself.

All of Catherine's writings, in fact, her entire life, unfold in light of the relationship of Creator and creature which exists from the first moment of creation, when the Father, who is "ineffable mercy," created man and woman "in mercy."<sup>18</sup> Speaking to the Father in prayer, Catherine references this moment, saying: "You conformed your creature to yourself . . . conforming us to your own image and likeness, participating in your eternal Trinity."<sup>19</sup> While Feuerbach criticizes man for making God in man's image, Catherine praises the God who made man in God's image.

Divine love accompanies divine mercy. The merciful Creator reveals himself to Catherine as being "madly in love with [his] creature"<sup>20</sup> so much so that he acts "as if [he] were drunk with love, infatuated with [his] creature."<sup>21</sup> She asks him, "Do you need your creature? It seems so to me, for you act as if you could not live without her. She runs away from you and you go looking for her. Why are you so mad? Because you have fallen in love with what you have made."<sup>22</sup> How absurd. How radical. A God who not only creates but also is madly in love with his creature! Neither Feuerbach nor the new atheists can reconcile the existence of a god, love, and human happiness. Catherine argues that man's nothingness before the *totally other* is love and life-giving humility, the source of joy, freedom, and ultimate happiness.<sup>23</sup>

This Creator God is not satisfied with his own enjoyment of his creature. In the *Dialogue*, the Father tells Catherine to "open the eye of your intellect and look within me, and you will see the dignity and beauty of my creature which possesses reason."<sup>24</sup> Man's consciousness enfolds him within this mystery, where growth in virtue is intimately connected with growth in the twofold knowledge of he who is and she who is not. As creature, man only comes to full consciousness in knowing his nothingness before God.

Feuerbach's "self-consciousness" limited man to knowledge of himself, to his own reason, will, and affection. Catherine's consciousness, expressed as "self-knowledge," opens man to discover the very source of these powers in the Creator who fashioned the human person with understanding to know God, memory to keep him in mind, and will to love him beyond all else.<sup>25</sup> Catherine emphasizes the twofold nature of self-knowledge: True self-knowledge is planted in knowledge of God. Self-knowledge considered merely as self-consciousness, Catherine warns, would end in confusion or presumption since knowledge of self brings with it knowledge of the magnitude of our weakness and sins. Such knowledge detached from God's love leads to despair. On the other hand, a

knowledge of God without self-knowledge can lead to presumption since we easily deceive ourselves and fall into selfish self-love.<sup>26</sup>

Here the full irony of the situation becomes clear. I noted that Catherine seems to fulfill Feuerbach's teaching on naïve religious illusions, but in fact Feuerbach fulfills Catherine's teaching on the dangers of men who through presumption fail to recognize God, fail to attain true self-knowledge, and instead make of themselves a god.

### **The God-Man: Saved by Mercy**

Catherine is a Dominican, and as such her theology is Incarnational. Every element of her theology flows from God who is First Truth, through his Son, the Word made flesh. Even God's mercy manifested toward his creature in creation reaches fulfillment in salvation through Jesus Christ. Christ extends God's love and mercy beyond creation, for after Adam and Eve's sin, the same mercy which created man, "redeemed us from eternal death" by means of the pain and blood of the Word Incarnate.<sup>27</sup> As the Father explains to Catherine: "Well you see that having given you my image and likeness, and you having lost grace through sin, I united my nature to yours in order to give you back the life of grace, veiling my divine nature in your humanity."<sup>28</sup> Taking the Father at his word, Catherine will state in words similar to those of Athanasius: "God was made human and humanity was made God."<sup>29</sup> She illustrates the radical implications of this truth in a prayer where she boldly declares: "In your nature, eternal Godhead, I shall come to know my own nature. And what is my nature, ineffable Love? It is fire since you are nothing other than the Fire of Love."<sup>30</sup>

In Christ the division between Catherine and Feuerbach is complete. The latter, as one might expect, categorizes Christ as yet another of theology's illusions, though Feuerbach refuses to lower himself to the level of historical critics like Strauss, Bauer, and others who argue from a merely "historical analysis of Christianity."<sup>31</sup> Feuerbach, instead, "accepts the Christ of religion" because this Christ, the "superhuman being," is nothing else than "a product and reflex of the supernatural human mind,"<sup>32</sup> which serves as a mediator lifting man to "the knowledge of the truth of his own natural being."<sup>33</sup>

## The Bridge

Catherine, too, along with St. Paul and St. Thomas Aquinas, speaks of Christ as a mediator, but in a radically different manner from Feuerbach. She presents this teaching as the Father himself revealed it to her, through the image of Christ the Bridge (*Il Ponte*).<sup>34</sup>

In the *Dialogue* the Father tells Catherine how Adam and Eve's sin broke up the road to heaven, dividing earth from heaven. Since man's way to God was destroyed, a bridge was necessary so man could cross over the raging waters of sin and death below. The Father himself is the first *pontifex*, the bridge-maker, building it in the body of his Son. Through his death on the Cross, Christ's body becomes a bridge that "stretches from heaven to earth,"<sup>35</sup> uniting "the height of heaven, that is, the divine nature, with the earth of [our] humanity."<sup>36</sup> By his passion Christ makes of his own body the way each of us must travel. "He is the Way, Truth, and Life."<sup>37</sup> This bridge is made of the stones of Christ's real, solid virtues cemented together with his blood. As we cross the Bridge, we, too, "put on Christ" and grow in virtue. Here Catherine returns to the theme of self-knowledge, for putting on Christ requires entering into the "cell" of self-knowledge, a place of silence within, where the soul is alone with God.<sup>38</sup> In this cell the two knowledges of "He who is" and "she who is not" unite.

## Virtue and the Common Good

This cell of self-knowledge is not merely an ethereal teaching for special souls. Catherine may have been a mystic but her teaching is concrete and practical—applicable to the life of all men and women but necessary in a particular way for public figures, which brings us back to "the two cities." In her many letters to political leaders in her own Siena, as well as Florence, Pisa, and other Tuscan towns, and even to the Signori of the Republic of Rome, Catherine exhibits political acumen coupled with steadfast consistency to all the theological principles already addressed.

She demands virtue and growth in self-knowledge of ecclesial and political leaders, not merely for their own sake, but for the sake of those they serve. She exhorts them to be "fearless rulers" of their "own city" and the city "lent to [them]."<sup>39</sup> The soul with self-knowledge knows how to govern her own city, how to root out the inordinate self-love and servile fear that endanger both cities. As she writes, "one will badly possess the loaned city if he does not first govern and rule himself."<sup>40</sup> Rulers blinded by self-love, she says, "do not attend to the universal common good, but only to their own good."<sup>41</sup>



In her own unique style Catherine also links good governance, the common good, and the justice of a ruler back to creation and redemption, and God's crazy love for his creature.<sup>42</sup> As would be expected, she demands that civil leaders possess the virtue of justice, or as Catherine calls it, the "pearl of justice." But justice alone is insufficient. It must be connected with the higher virtue of religion whereby man pays homage to God. The pearl of justice, she says, will only shine in the hearts of rulers if they embrace gratitude that comes from being conscious that the soul is both saved and redeemed in mercy. Only with gratitude will rulers pay "their debt to God, to Christ on earth, to their neighbor, and to themselves."<sup>43</sup> A leader "puts on the new man" by "rendering gratitude to God for his continuous love and blessings,"<sup>44</sup> and thus he sees his neighbor and those he serves, not as a tool or an object but as a means for showing his love to God.

## Conclusion

Catherine's anthropology, grounded in knowledge of God, is undoubtedly an important contribution to our modern world. But one might argue that it is also problematic, that it is *too* Catholic. While we may use it within the Church today, we cannot preach creation and redemption in mercy to secular leaders in the same way Catherine could. I agree. Catherine's contribution is more about us—about Catholics and other Christians—about priests, religious, and laity.

In his 2010 Wednesday audience on Catherine, Pope Benedict XVI stated that in "moments of greatest difficulty," the Lord raises up "men and women saints who stir minds and hearts, bringing about conversion and renewal."<sup>45</sup> Catherine did this in the fourteenth century, but her message is just as true today. Catherine reminds each one of us that we have to take care of our own city, our own soul first, before we can help others. Catherine challenges us, in the midst of today's crises, to open our eyes, to see God, to see ourselves, to see our neighbor, with the eye of the intellect, with eyes of faith.

Catherine understood the danger of a crisis, but she also recognized the opportunities a crisis posed for renewal. She fearlessly seized the opportunity, never allowing the danger to blind her or to frighten her away from doing the great but difficult good. Catherine calls each of us to walk courageously (*virilmente*) toward sanctity,<sup>46</sup> in the full knowledge of self as a creature created by a God who is madly in love with me and with you and with every human being we meet. This knowledge enabled her to set her world ablaze. Christ challenges us to do the same: "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49).

## Notes

1. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Motu Proprio*, Proclaiming Saint Bridget of Sweden, Saint Catherine of Siena, and Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Co-Patronesses of Europe *Spes Aedificandi* (October 1, 1999), 1.
2. Johannes Jorgenson, *Saint Catherine of Siena*, trans. Ingeborg Lund (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1938), v.
3. Karl Barth identified Feuerbach as one of the few modern philosophers “exclusively and precisely occupied with the problem of theology,” though Barth adds that Feuerbach’s “love was an unhappy one.” See Karl Barth, “An Introductory Essay” in Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), x. Barth also notes Feuerbach’s skill in dealing with the Bible, the church fathers, and Martin Luther, and the fact that “no philosopher of his time penetrated the contemporary theological situation as effectually as he, and few spoke with such pertinence.” One cannot entirely attribute the initiation of atheism to Feuerbach. Fichte and Hegel prepared the way as Hegel himself stated: “In recent times, culture has risen so far above the old opposition between faith and reason, between faith and knowledge, that this opposition has acquired an entirely new meaning and has been transferred into the area of competency of philosophy itself. As against the old slogan about philosophy being the handmaid of theology, philosophy has invincibly asserted her own absolute autonomy to such an extent that all such slogans and phrases have disappeared and reason . . . has asserted itself and its competency in religion so forcefully that any conflict between reason and miracles or things of that sort has come to be considered outmoded and sheer obscurantism.” *Glaube und Wissen*, quoted in Cornelius Fabro, *God in Exile: Modern Atheism* (New York: Newman Press, 1968), 589. But while Hegel maintained positive assertions regarding God, Feuerbach attributes all such assertions explicitly to “man.” See Fabro, *God in Exile*, 653.
4. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, trans. R. Manheim (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 285.
5. See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 27: “The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for”; Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), no. 19: “The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God.”
6. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 13. Feuerbach would argue that the child does not really know himself. He only understands himself in another who is like himself, in “the form of another man,” in this case, the God he created.

7. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 1–2. To demonstrate his own “development” from the childish religion to maturity Feuerbach stated that “God was my first thought, reason my second and man my third and last.”
8. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 252–53. Since faith causes these errors, Feuerbach concludes that it necessarily includes “*a malignant principle*.” Christian faith betrays an egoism, vanity, and self-complacency. Christians see the mote in the eye of non-Christians, but “cannot perceive the beam in their own.” The malignancy ends in a denial of “Nature” itself—pure irrationality.
9. Feuerbach provided the rational arguments against God’s existence. Later atheists, including Marx, Engels, and Bakunin, simply assumed this point. Copleston disregards Feuerbach’s “superficial” rejection of theism and the God of Genesis but does acknowledge Feuerbach’s influence on “dialectical materialism and the economic theory of Marx and Engels.” Frederick Charles Copleston, SJ, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 7, pt. 2 (Maryland: Image Publishing LTD, 1965), 67.
10. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 2. See also 13–14, where Feuerbach argues that primitive man’s concept of man versus God is really “nothing else than the antithesis between the human nature in general and the human individual.”
11. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 3–4.
12. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, xxxvi.
13. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 281. Feuerbach refutes his detractors by stating that true religion proclaims, “God is man, man is God; it is not I, but religion that denies the God who is *not* man, but only an *ens rationis*” (xxxvi).
14. B. Raimondo da Capua, *S. Caterina de Siena (Legenda Maior)*, trans. Tinagli, OP (Siena: Cantagalli, 1934), chap. 10.
15. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 33.
16. *Caterina da Siena, Le Orazioni*, ed. G. Cavallini (Siena, Cateriniane, 1978), no. 1, no. 20. English translations of Catherine’s Italian writings are my own.
17. Pope Paul VI captured the essence of Catherine’s thought in his closing speech of the Second Vatican Council. Commenting on her writings he stated that “a knowledge of God is a prerequisite for a knowledge of man as he really is, in all his fullness.” Pope Paul VI, “Address during the Last General Meeting of the Second Vatican Council,” December 7, 1965.
18. Caterina da Siena, *Le Orazioni*, no. 19.
19. Caterina da Siena, *Le Orazioni*, no. 19.
20. Caterina da Siena, *Le Orazioni*, no. 20.

21. Caterina da Siena, *Le Orazioni*, no. 10.
22. Caterina da Siena, *Il Dialogo*, ed. G. Cavallini (Siena: Cantagalli, 1995), 153.
23. Feuerbach argues that this “subjective” God, which man created, requires man to divest “himself of his subjectivity, because God is, *per se*, his relinquished self.” Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 31.
24. Caterina da Siena, *Il Dialogo*, 1.
25. Caterina da Siena, *Le Orazioni*, no. 1.
26. Cf. Caterina da Siena, *Le Lettere* (Milano: Edizione Paoline, 1987), no. 49, “A Monna Alessa”; *Il Dialogo*, 73, 86.
27. Caterina da Siena, *Le Orazioni*, no. 19. After Original Sin, Catherine says that divine mercy holds back divine justice, and keeps the earth from “opening up and swallowing us and the animals from devouring us.”
28. Caterina da Siena, *Il Dialogo*, 12. The Father’s statement answers questions posed by both Catherine and Feuerbach. Feuerbach once asked, “How can I share the peace of a being if I am not of the same nature with him? ... How then can I become a partaker of his peace if I am not a partaker of his nature?” Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 45. Feuerbach asks the right questions, but he could not accept the answer since it required faith, and Feuerbach, like so many people today, pitted faith against reason.
29. Caterina da Siena, *Il Dialogo*, 15; cf. Athanasius, *De Incarnatione Verbi*, 54.3, PG 25, 192B.
30. Caterina da Siena, *Le Orazioni*, no. 22.
31. Feuerbach rejects their denial of Christ on the basis of apparent scriptural contradictions.
32. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, xli.
33. Fabro, *God in Exile*, 653. Christ, “the incarnate God,” Feuerbach believes, “is only the *apparent* [emphasis added] manifestation of deified man; for the descent of God to man is necessarily preceded by the exaltation of man to God. Man was already in God, was already God himself, before God became man, i.e., showed himself as man.” Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 50.
34. Cf. 1 Timothy 2:5: “There is ... one Mediator of God and man, the man Christ Jesus,” and Aquinas calls Christ the “perfect mediator,” since he joins or unites the two between whom he mediates: God and man. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III q26 a1. See also John 12:32: “When I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all things to myself.”
35. Caterina da Siena, *Il Dialogo*, 21–22.

36. Caterina da Siena, *Le Lettere*, no. 272, “A frate Raimondo da Capua dell’ordine de’ predicatori.”
37. Caterina da Siena, *Le Lettere*, no. 272.
38. Caterina da Siena, *Le Lettere*, no. 154, “A frate Francesco Tebaldi di Fiorenza, essendo nell’isola di Gorgona.”
39. Caterina da Siena, *Le Lettere*, no. 123, “Ai signori difensori della città di Siena.”
40. Caterina da Siena, *Le Lettere*, no. 123.
41. Caterina da Siena, *Le Lettere*, no. 311, “Ai signor difensori del popolo e commune di Siena.”
42. Here one finds loose connections with Thomas’s teaching on justice and the allied virtue of religion—man rendering due worship to God. Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II q21; II-II q58.
43. Caterina da Siena, *Le Lettere*, no. 311.
44. Caterina da Siena, *Le Lettere*, no. 337, “A’ signori priori dell’arti, e al gonfaloniere di giustizia del popolo e del comune di Firenze”; cf. Ephesians 4:22–24; Colossians 3:12: “clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.” In the same letter, she argues that by working justice on earth, the ruler becomes a means for preserving himself and the people from the “rod of divine justice.”
45. Pope Benedict XVI, Wednesday Audience, November 24, 2010.
46. Pope Benedict XVI, Wednesday Audience, November 24, 2010.