



## *Divine attributes in Catherine of Siena (1347–1380)*

John J. Conley  
Loyola University Maryland

Catherine of Siena often uses an analogical approach to discuss the nature and attributes of God. She employs nuptial imagery to describe the mystical union between God (the bridegroom) and the human soul (the bride). She draws from nature to express what is ineffable in God. Oceanic images point to divine providence: "You [God] are a peaceful sea in which the soul feeds and is nourished as she rests in you in love's affection and union by conforming her will with your high eternal will, which wants nothing other than to make us holy" (*Prayers* 2). Fire imagery evokes the eternity of God: "You are a fire always burning. Yet, though you always consume all that the soul possesses apart from you, you never consume the things that are pleasing to you. Burn with the fire of your Spirit and consume, root out from the bottom up, every fleshly love and affection from the hearts of the new plants you have kindly seen fit to set into the mystic body of holy Church" (*Prayers* 7). The divine attributes are revealed by mystical, analogical evocation rather than by abstract definition.

### **Primary Sources:**

Catherine of Siena 1978. *Le orazioni di S. Caterina da Siena*, Cavallini, Giulian (ed). Rome: Edizioni Cateriniane.

Catherine of Siena 1983. *The Prayers of Catherine of Siena*, Noffke, Suzanne (ed). New York: Paulist Press.

### **Secondary Sources:**

Noffke, Suzanne 1996. *Catherine of Siena: Vision Through a Distant Eye*. Collegeville, MN:

Glazier/ Liturgical Press.

O'Driscoll, Mary T. 1980. St. Catherine of Siena: Life and Spirituality, in *Angelicum*, 57 (3), 305-329.

Undset, Sigrid 1954. *Catherine of Siena*, New York: Sheed & Ward.

**Keywords:**

analogy, divine attributes, imagery, mysticism, providence, eternity