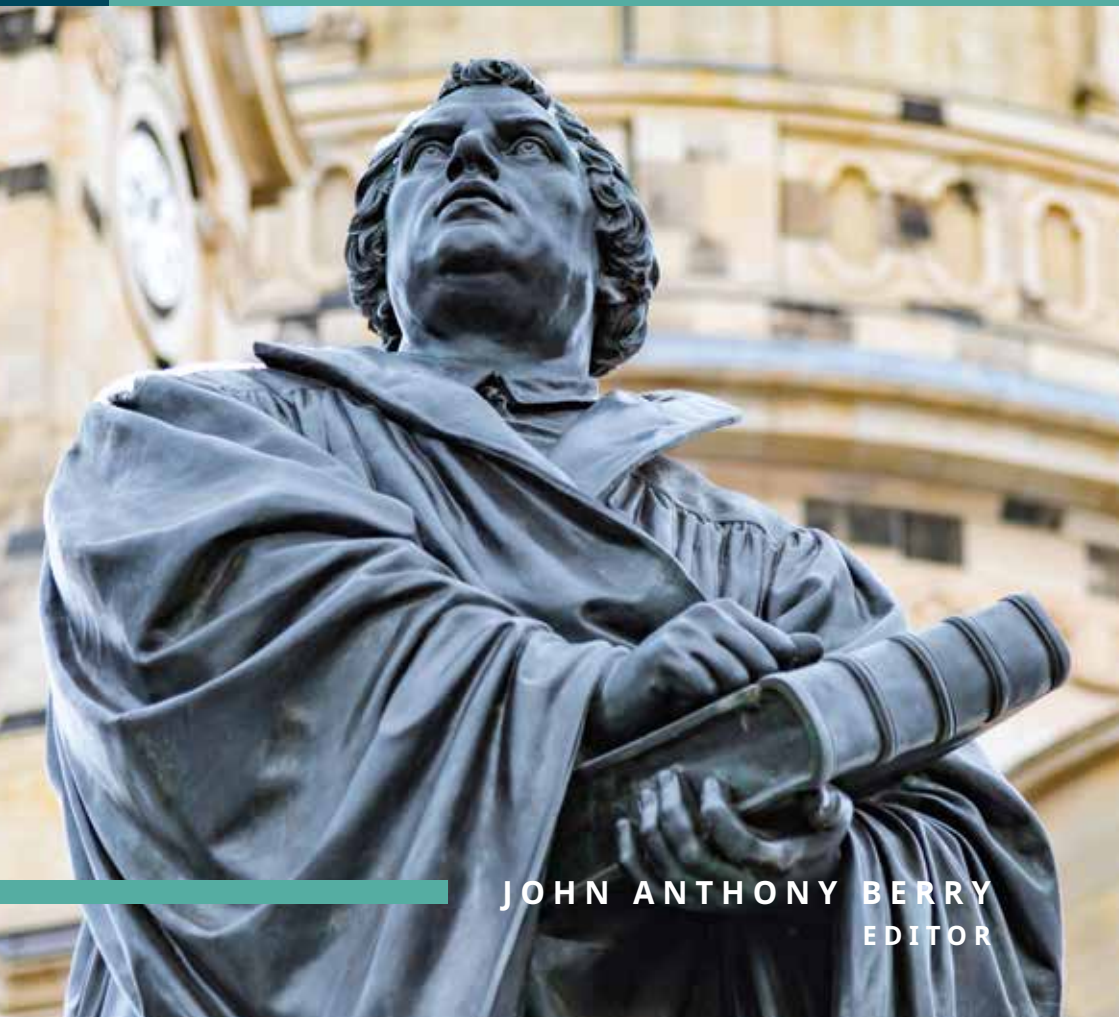


# The Spirit of the Reformation

500 YEARS ON

Proceedings of the Malta International Theological Conference II



JOHN ANTHONY BERRY  
EDITOR

**The Spirit  
of the Reformation**

**5 0 0   Y E A R S   O N**



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Proceedings of the  
Malta International Theological Conference  
II

**John Anthony Berry**

Editor



L-Università ta' Malta  
Faculty of Theology

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# Table of Contents

**Introduction**..... 1

*John Anthony Berry*

**Biographies**..... 11

## **Setting the Context**

1. The Reformation and the Ascent of the North..... 17

*Dominic Fenech*

2. From Reform to Reformation: Luther's Concept of Renewal..... 31

*Ute Gause*

## **Theological Issues**

3. Martin Luther's Take on Justification by Faith in Romans ..... 55

*Paul Sciberras*

4. The Human Being Created in the Image of God ..... 77

*Beate Bengard*

5. Meritum in Aquinas and Martin Luther ..... 93

*Piotr Roszak, Damian Dorocki*

6. Baptizatus sum: Consequences and Possibilities  
for the Ecclesia Semper Reformanda ..... 123  
*Anne Kull*
7. Aspects of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Ministry... 135  
*Hector Scerri*

**The Spirit of the Reformation Today**

8. Martin Luther: Deviant Monk or Well-Meaning Reformer? ..... 151  
*René Camilleri*
9. Maddalena de Pazzi's Consilium Trinitatis in the Light of Luther's  
Solus Christus doctrine. An Approximation ..... 161  
*Charló Camilleri*
10. The Impact of Eschatological Differences in Catholic and Lutheran  
Traditions on Modern Understanding of God's Creation ..... 183  
*Oleh Kindiy*
11. Communio Sanctorum - Communio Bonorum:  
von Balthasar and Luther ..... 203  
*Pauline Dimech*

**Concluding Reflections**..... 223  
*George Grima*

**Index**..... 229

# Maddalena de Pazzi's *Consilium Trinitatis* in the light of Luther's *Solus Christus* Doctrine. An Approximation

CHARLÓ CAMILLERI

“The Church needs a reformation which is not the work of man, namely the pope, or of many men, namely the cardinals, both of which the most recent council has demonstrated, but it is the work of the whole world, indeed it is the work of God alone. However, only God who has created time knows the time for this reformation.”<sup>1</sup>

“Most dear, most dear, most dear Father, ponder, ponder, ponder, please ponder, please ponder-a thousand times I should like to say it -ponder what I have said to you, that the appointed time has come when God wants to renew His Church by means of His Vicar and His ministers. But you will wonder, you will wonder and I myself would also wonder, and rightly can men wonder, that God should wish to reveal such

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1 Martin Luther, “Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses,” trans. Carl W. Folkemer, in Helmut T. Lehmann and Jaroslav Pelikan, eds., *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols, (Philadelphia and St. Louis, 1955–1986), 31:250. (=LW); WA 1, 62, 27–31.



a thing to a creature so mean, so ignorant and so uninformed as I am. Yet remember that God wishes men to see that it is He Who works; for were He to reveal this to someone who possessed wisdom and some power, men would not recognise it in all its fullness as the work of God. But God wants to reveal this to a mean little worm of His, such as I am, because He wishes men to see more clearly how great is His goodness in this work of His.”<sup>2</sup>

### Prolegomena

Placing together Martin Luther (1483–1546), the initiator of the Reformation, and Magdalena de’ Pazzi (1566–1607), the Catholic Revival mystic saint par excellence, might seem too much of a daring endeavour. Seemingly antithetical to each other to the extent that the latter’s flourishing, and exuberantly fruitful mystical experience was the card put on the table by the Roman Catholic Church to neutralise Luther’s claim that she is the *spelunca latronum licentiosissima, lupanar omnium impudentissimum, regnum peccati, mortis et inferni*.<sup>3</sup> In truth Luther’s condemnations were addressed to the Roman Curia, headed by Leo X, whom he recognised *sicut agnos in medio luporum sedes, sicut Daniel in medio leonum, et cum Ezechiele inter scorpiones habitas*.<sup>4</sup>

2 Maddalena de’ Pazzi, “Al Rev.do Pietro della Compagnia del soave nome di Gesù,” in *Tutte le opere*.

3 Martin Luther, “Letter to Leo X on the Treatise ‘Concerning Christian Liberty,’” in *Documents Illustrative of the Continental Reformation*, ed. Beresford James Kidd (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 73-74. For the ‘politics’ of canonizations, see: Clare Copeland, *Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi: The Making of a Counter-Reformation Saint*, Oxford Theology and Religion Monographs (New York/NY: Oxford University Press, 2016); Clare Copeland and Jan Machielsen, *Angels of Light? Sanctity and the Discernment of Spirits in the Early Modern Period*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2013); Andrea Cutlip, *The Influence of Holiness: Religion, Politics, and the veneration of Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi* (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, Wilmington 2003), *Pro manuscripto*.

4 Ibid.

Indeed, there's no much difference here from Magdalena de' Pazzi's vocabulary used in the "Letters on the Renewal of the Church" addressed to the Pope, Cardinals, Bishops and other Prelates and influential people upon whom the onus of the renewal of the Church fell. The image itself of Daniel in the Lions' Den is central to the volume known as *La Probatione* functioning as the foundational paradigm for the prophetic words and dramatic gestures the mystic performs within her community to elucidate the urgent need of reform within the Church. Perhaps also they share also much in common through St Augustine who was to both a source of doctrinal inspiration.

It is well recognised that in his protestations Luther appeals to the authority of Paul the Apostle and of previous reformers and saints, like for example the Carmelite Baptist of Mantua, considered as the Precursor of the German Reformation, of whom in 1571 an *Anthologia... sententiosa collecta ex operibus Baptistae* was published at Nürnberg. The Mantuan, honored by Erasmus as the Christiano More was infact was a zealous advocate of reform, and his *Fastorum libri duodecim*, dedicated to Leo X, warns of the pending disaster upon the Church. Mantuan's attacks were so strong that Luther simply borrowed them. In the *Tischreden* (*The Table Talks*) Luther recalls that the Baptist was the first poet he read, even before Virgil and Ovid. Manganaro observes that

Oltre che dal valore attribuito ai suoi versi latini, l'ampia diffusione delle opere del Mantovano lungo tutto il Cinquecento e in tutta Europa fu determinata certamente dall'"ansia polemica e riformatrice," particolarmente presente nelle sue due ultime ecloghe: "la IX sui costumi della Curia romana, la X sugli abusi e sulle divisioni dell'Ordine, nell'auspicio del ritorno al genuino spirito originario." Si deve in buona parte a questa componente la straordinaria fortuna delle

sue Egloghe nel XVI secolo, “come conferma di un filone umanistico-cristiano fortemente originale proprio nell’uso innovatore di un genere antico e classico per eccellenza, come il bucolico-pastorale.”

La fortuna del Mantovano assume dimensione e valenza altamente significative nell’Europa della Riforma e in particolar modo in Inghilterra. Gli attacchi alla corruzione papale resero le sue Egloghe (in cui essi erano particolarmente presenti) un testo curricolare in molte scuole inglesi, sancito dai programmi. Su quei testi si formarono, tra gli altri, Edmund Spenser e John Milton.<sup>5</sup>

It is not the scope of this contribution to analyse historically the Reformation movement. What is to be pointed out however is that Luther’s Reform is in line with the *Reformatio* movement coming down from the Middle Ages as an ideal of “changing a bad present situation by returning to the good and better times of the past.”<sup>6</sup>

This ideal for an *ecclesia semper reformanda* did not only find as its promoters and advocates spirit filled reformers and visionaries but also the Church herself in the Council of Constance (1414–1418). Similarly, can be stated on Magdalena de’ Pazzi, whose prophetic existence and project of reform is in line with the high aspirations of the Middle Ages. She herself chose to join the Florentine Carmelite monastic community wherein the Savonarolian ideals of reform were held in high esteem. As much as seldom did Luther use the term *reformatio*, “reformation,” so Magdalena never used the word. She preferred instead to use renovation from the Latin *renovatio*.

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5 Baptista Spagnoli, “Eclogae. IX. Falco. De moribus curiae romanae,” in *Poeti latini del quattrocento*, ed. Francesco Arnaldi; Lucia Gualdo Rosa; Liliana Monti Sabia (Milano-Napoli: Ricciardi, 1964), 898-911.

6 Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, *From Conflict to Communion. Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*, 36. (on-line):[vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/lutheran-fed-docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_2013\\_dal-conflitto-alla-comunione\\_en.html](http://vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/lutheran-fed-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_2013_dal-conflitto-alla-comunione_en.html). Accessed on August 10, 2017.

In the course of history, *reformatio* came to be associated with a movement of rupture and change of present structural forms in the ecclesial and political spheres, thus “re-form,” namely refers “to forming again.” *Renovatio* on the other hand seems to emphasise more the “act of making new again,” hence to “re-new.” While the former ideal seeks for “a return back to the good and better times of the past,” the latter seeks a way forward in continuation with the present. Today we would argue for a hermeneutics of continuity.

*Renovatio* and *reformatio* are not mutually exclusive as both are rooted in Biblical revelation in the dynamic movements of

1. conversion, namely a “returning back” after “breaking up” with sin (*convertere ad Deum et relinque peccata tua* - Eccl 17:21), and;
2. trust in the promise of the faithful and true Risen One who assured us “I make all things new” (Rev. 21:5). In Matthew Henry’s words “we may and ought to take God’s promise as present payment; if he has said that he makes all things new, it is done.”<sup>7</sup>

Underlying the *reformatio* is a penitential spirit, whereas the tinge of *renovatio* is positively paschal. While “the term “Reformation” came to be used as a designation for the complex of historical events that, in the narrower sense, encompass the years 1517 to 1555, thus from the time of the spread of Martin Luther’s “Ninety-five Theses” up until the Peace of Augsburg,” Maddalena’s *Renovatio* is a reflection of the final stage of the Catholic Reform under Pope Sixtus V (1585–1590) shifting from forcing reform on the Church to attracting the Church to renewal. Ultimately however, at the core of both movements stands God’s grace reaching us in Christ. “Reformation which is not the work of man, ...

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7 Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible, VI: Acts to Revelation*, unabridged edition by Ernie Stefanik from the 1706-1721 edition, Christian Classics Ethereal Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 1705.

indeed it is the work of God alone” and “the time established by God to renew his Church has come.” Both Luther and Maddalena would agree that “the Church is founded on the Word of God. It is *creatura Verbi*, not *creatura fidelium*. It is not us that make – or, for that matter, reform or renew – the Church; it is God who does so, through the preaching of the Gospel, under the power of the Holy Spirit.”

So, the real question is about two distinct ways of relating to God, of experiencing faith, of understanding it and preaching it to conform oneself to it. This said, approaching the Trinitarian mystery and the uniqueness of Christ in de’ Pazzi and Luther, this contribution aims at showing there are more common elements of agreement rather than disagreement. A fundamental characteristic of both Maddalena and the Reformers is a certain intuition that Christ, the Word is ‘absent,’ ‘missing.’ Both feel the urgency to make him ‘sacramentally’ present: Maddalena through the ‘preaching’ or verbalisation of the Word through the mystical utterances and her prophetic drama, while Luther and the Reformers by placing Sacred Scriptures at the core of the Church’s life. In both, *Solus Christus* and *Sola Scriptura* are we might say interchangeable.

Firstly, it has to be pointed out that the Reformers had no real issue with the Trinitarian dogma. Only they demanded this fundamental dogma “be grounded and proved not philosophically but exegetically.” If philosophical terms were to be used in the doctrine on God, these should be permitted “only insofar as those words actually illuminated the meaning of Scripture.”<sup>8</sup> This is exactly how de’ Pazzi approached the mysteries of faith, primarily that concerning the Trinity.

De’ Pazzi would find herself in Melancthon’s argument that Christ “wills that our eyes be fixed on the Son who has been manifested to us, that our prayers be directed to the eternal Father who has revealed

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8 Michael Reeves, “The Holy Trinity,” in *Reformation Theology. A Systematic Summary*, ed. Matthew Barrett (Illinois: Crossway, 2017), 195-196.

himself in the Son whom he has sent.”<sup>9</sup> Her mystical doctrine is a commentary on the Scriptures read and celebrated both personally (at least two hours a day) and in the Church’s Liturgy (the Divine Office, the daily Mass and Communitarian reading of Scriptures during meals and meditation in choir). Though well read in theology she was not one of the learned, thus her primary source were the Scriptures, illumined from the teachings of the Fathers, especially Augustine, and the Scholastics, especially Aquinas. Imparted to her by the learned chaplains of the Monastery and by the daily spiritual reading. Similarly could be said regarding to Christology.

### **Luther’s and Maddalena’s Case**

Luther’s standpoint is human unworthiness, reflecting his perennial struggle with God, ultimately a struggle to find a gracious Father in God. Magdalena’s starting point on the other hand is human dignity, reflecting her trust in God as loving Father who delights in communicating with her and through her.<sup>10</sup> These two ways of percieving God and thus relating to him are rooted in the negative and positive father figure experiences both faced in their upbringing and formation.

In Luther’s case, his childhood experience, “particularly his experience with his demanding father, is one reason why Luther had a robust doctrine of the fear of God.”<sup>11</sup> Largen observes that

The home in which Luther was raised contributed to his emphasis on the fear of God; more specifically, one of the reasons that the fear of God was so pervasive for Luther was

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9 Philipp Melanchthon, *Loci communes*, 1543, trans. J.A.O.Preus (St. Louis/MO: Concordia, 1992), 18.

10 See as an example of the Eternal Father speaking through Maddalena’s voice, “Colloquio 46,” in *Tutte le opere*, III,

11 Kristin Johnston Largen, “The Role of Fear in Our Love of God: A Lutheran Perspective,” in *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 50, no. 1 (2011): 27.

his own childhood and religious development, as well as his early monastic experience of the faith. (...) Leppen observes that “Luther reports that his education was harsh ... in addition to his father, who ‘whipped him so severely,’ his mother also once beat him ‘until the blood flowed’ because he had stolen a mere nut.” In this context of a somber and fearful childhood, then, it is no surprise that Leppen asserts, “The punishing God haunted Luther’s childhood and also the later Luther’s spiritual horizon and theology.” Even after Luther became a monk, he was still haunted by a punishing God. What is perhaps surprising is that Luther even uses fear language in describing his understanding of Christ. Leppen argues that “Although the young Luther struggled constantly with the devil, another figure loomed large in Luther’s spirituality. This figure was Christ. The picture Luther paints of Christ in some key texts is as a menacing person in his own right, not as a friendly antithesis to the devil.” This fear of Christ was pervasive. Leppen describes how, in Luther’s Commentary on Galatians, Luther states how he learned early to stand in awe of Christ as the great judge, and also to fear the very sound of Christ’s name. In another text, Luther somewhat shockingly even compares the fear he has of the devil to the fear he has of Christ; this comparison, as Leppen notes, “captures the entire panorama of his childhood’s religion. Christ appears as a threatening judge together with a threatening devil.” Thus, Leppen concludes: “The glaring ambivalence between punishing God and freeing God is the distinctive characteristic of Luther’s spirituality and theology. Luther cultivates both sides throughout his

spiritual biography. Both sides are worked into his theology in different ways. The profound tension shapes the theological ambivalence that Luther could never resolve.”<sup>12</sup>

In Maddalena's case, the childhood experience of warm parents, thrust her into a relationship of loving trust in God who is merciful love. In the *The Colloquies* for example God the Father speaks through her voice and in contemplating the divine mystery she exclaims that in everything God is moved by love. Even if he were to give us hell he is motivated by love.<sup>13</sup>

This is not to state that Luther did not believe in or experience God as Love, or that Maddalena did not confront herself with God's judgement.<sup>14</sup> Rather these themes are present in both to a larger and lesser extent with a particular emphasis shaping their respective spiritual worldview. For Luther “the great fire of the love of God for us” consists of “the heart and conscience becoming happy, secure, and content.” Consequently, “this is what preaching the Christian faith

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12 Ibid. 27. See also: Volker Leppin, “God in Luther's Life and Thought,” in *The Global Luther: A Theologian for Modern Times*, ed. Christine Helmer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 84-89.

13 ‘I Quaranta giorni,’ in *Tutte le opere I (16th day)*.

14 Though Maddalena reflects on God's judgement, the theme of God's wrath seldom appears in her theological reflection. Rather in *The Forty-fifth Colloquy* she contests the wrath of God for us: “Sei mirabile nel Padre placandolo dall'ira (se può avere ira in sé) verso di noi...” And even if God is wrathful in relation to us sinners, he is easily moved to compassion and mercy out of love towards us through the merits of the Blood of Christ and at the sight of an act of humble penitence “È cosa mirabile considerare che colui che è infinito e talmente grande e potente da contenere in sé ogni cosa, si lascia offendere ed è offeso da una cosa tanto meschina e bassa come è la creatura, e si placa così facilmente per un po' di umiliazione da parte della stessa creatura. Anche questa è una grande meraviglia operata da te, Verbo, presso il tuo eterno Padre mediante il tuo Sangue. Chi la può comprendere? La comprende soltanto chi la prova, e la prova colui al quale è fatta comprendere dalla tua bontà.”: *Tutte le opere III*.



means.”<sup>15</sup> In one instance, where he mentions divine love in *De servo arbitrio*, “the manifesto of the Reformation,”<sup>16</sup> Luther clarifies that the apostle “Paul is contending that all men are unrighteous and in need of God’s special grace—the love, wisdom, and power of God by which He saves us.”<sup>17</sup>

Consequently, as he argues in his manifesto human will has been obstructed and deadened by sin. The sinful human person stands in need of God’s saving grace in order to freely arise to Christ. In Luther’s view, the state of being in need of God’s grace nullifies claims to human freedom and autonomy. To argue in favour of autonomy and freedom is tantamount to rejection of the Trinitarian faith in God who created us, saved us and sanctified us. Only in Christ and empowered by the gift of the Holy Spirit that we take our flight towards the Triune God. Similarly, de’ Pazzi says that divine love manifests itself in God lavishly

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15 Martin Luther, “What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels,” in *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 106. Recently modern Finnish Lutheran scholars in the course of ecumenical dialogues have sparked an interest in reexamining Luther’s theology from the perspective of Love rather than Justification as the former has been underestimated and the latter overemphasized. For Luther, love is the fruit of faith, and is revealed in our love of God, of others, and of self. See Sun-young Kim, *Luther on Faith and Love: Christ and the Law in the 1535 Galatians Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2014). See also Egil Grislis, “Luther’s Understanding of the Wrath of God,” *The Journal of Religion* 41, no. 4 (1961): 277-292 for the relationship between God’s Love and Wrath in Luther’s Theology.

16 Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Works* – IX (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House 2003), 471.

17 Martin Luther, *De servo arbitrio*, 4.

outpouring himself upon us, the unrighteous. She argues that God creates and loves the soul of the worst of sinners with the same love with which he created and loves the soul of the Virgin Mary.<sup>18</sup>

### **Divine Mercy and the Flood from Dry-bleed Lamb**

For Maddalena, God's merciful love, is revealed to us to the fullest in Jesus Christ. It is a deluge which inundates the whole of creation, none excluded. Divine Mercy, when compared to man's indifference and ingratitude, seems more powerful and awesome. Very often she reflects on man's sinful indifference towards God, and asks, in an astonishing way, what it is that man wants from God in order to decide for God. In her first performance experience of the Passion, while contemplating on the beatings suffered by Jesus Christ, the saint asks in an amazing way: 'What is needed from You, O great Love? Is it knowledge? Is it goodness, kindness? Is it Mercy? Is it Gentleness or Love?'<sup>19</sup>

De' Pazzi puts together the powerful contrast between human sinfulness and God's lavishness through the image of two councils convened in heaven and earth. In line with the theology of the consilium trinitatis understood by her as a loving between the divine Persons, she deciphers twelve gradations or channels of water (grace) starting from the divine decision to create and redeem humanity. The vision constitutes the central phase of St. Mary Magdalene's mystical experience. In it De' Pazzi gives a global view of the Christian mystery,

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18 "I Quaranta Giorni" (day 2), in *Tutte le opere I*: "Poi mi sembrava di vedere la Ss.ma Trinità piena d'amore per le creature, ma le creature non riconoscevano questo amore e non s'impegnavano ad amare puramente Dio. Vedevo che Dio ama l'anima di un infedele con lo stesso amore con cui ha creato l'anima della sua santissima Madre." Maddalena's doctrine echoes Mechtild of Magdebourg and the Medieval *minne mystiek* movement. See *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity*, ed Paul L. Gavrilyuk – Sarah Coakley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

19 "I Quaranta Giorni" edited by Ermanno del SS. Sacramento in *Tutte le opere di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi dai manoscritti originali I*, compiled by Fulvio Nardoni (Firenze: Centro Nazionale del Libro: Firenze, 1960), 173.

presenting the history of salvation, looked at from the final stage: the presence of Christ the dry-bleeding lamb (*agnello svenato*) who is forever active in the bosom of the Father. As in Luther's doctrine, for de' Pazzi, the salvation brought to us by Christ is in fact a Trinitarian salvation. Thus in her understanding, plastified in the vision inspired by the imagery of Revelations, the *Christus passus et gloriosus* is central. In these twelve channels the entire story of salvation, starting from the ab eterno trinitarian *perichoresis*, to the incarnation of the Word, his passion, death and resurrection, right through the time of the Church to the second coming of Christ.

These twelve channels reveal God's intent to save humanity from nothingness/oblivion and destruction first in creation, understood as the communication of divine love. Another contrasting council is convened on earth by the wicked, who plan a way forward to do away with Christ. In response to this earthly council of the wicked God's intent is manifested in the work of redemption. Two scenes constitute the vision:

1. Eternal divine love which emanates through history, until the end of time, until everything is recapitulated in Christ (Eph 1:10). The creation of the cosmos as a communication of love. There follows the creation of the angels and then the creation of human beings in a state of innocence, so that men and women could communicate with God and receive God's gifts.
2. Humanity does not respond adequately and so the second scene opens. Because of sin, humanity becomes incapable of understanding God and of receiving God's gifts. At this point God's plan for humanity's redemption from the slavery of sin and to confer grace's sublime gifts enabling us to be once more faithful and capable of divine communication, is revealed. This plan of salvation is brought about through the Mystery of Christ.

Thus, spiritual journey is presented here as a re-creation in Christ incarnate, the bridge and staircase of salvation. It is through Christ alone, that the complete return to God does not remain only a possibility but becomes an exultant reality as “it is the uniqueness of his person that determines the efficacy of his work.”<sup>20</sup>

In de' Pazzi's mystical writings the centrality of Christ is conveyed also through a number of images and metaphors. Christ is the book, the mirror, the keeper, the guarantee of our access to the Father.<sup>21</sup> De' Pazzi holds to the theological logic of the *logos incarnandus*, showing that the Son of God, from eternity, is the one to be incarnated for us and for our salvation. She repeatedly stresses that the Word became clothed in our humanity in order to redeem us from sin and to show us the greatest and final expression of love in his passion and death on the cross.

The blood of Christ, symbol and witness to his burning love for humanity, is the means offered to us to be free from sin and to become god-like. In the ecstasies of the saint, the passion, the cross, the death and the blood of Christ constitute the place where humanity is re-created, in an even more perfect way than originally and in a way that surpasses the state of the angels. To elucidate this, de' Pazzi further on states that God drowned the world with two floods: that of justice in the flooding of Genesis and that of mercy in the flooding of the Blood of Christ.<sup>22</sup>

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20 Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ. Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove/IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 29.

21 Similar metaphors are found in the Reformers' writings. See David Gibson, *Reading the Decree: Exegesis, Election and Christology in Calvin and Barth* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 4.

22 “I Colloqui” edited by Claudio Catena in *Tutte le opere di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi dai manoscritti originali* II, written by Fulvio Nardoni (Firenze: Centro Nazionale del Libro, 1960), 191.

In Scripture, the event of the flooding portrays in as in a dyptich the image of God entirely destroying evil and evildoers, as well as the image of God who in this way purifies creation. We have therefore not complete destruction but an act of purification, a washing. It is violence that brings about death and the culture of death that leads to destruction. The biblical text tells us that God intervenes in a merciful way: 'But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord' (Genesis 6:8). Faced with violence, God's reaction is one of love and mercy. Grace is mercy. God's judgement is always merciful in his justice as there is unfailingly the promise of salvation usually through the choosing of a remnant from a perverse generation. In this case, it is Noah and the remnant refugees in the Ark with him. In Maddalena's thought these are the 'elect of God' (*i sua eletti*) the chosen ones by, in and through Christ.<sup>23</sup>

De' Pazzi allegorically interprets the deluge story as a pre-figuration of the annunciation account. Just as Noah found favour in the eyes of God, so Gabriel announces to Mary that she has found favour in the fulness of time: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God" (Luke 1:30). Allegory Mary becomes the new Ark carrying forward the Incarnate Jesus Christ, who is God's peace and mercy to us. In Jesus Christ, God is revealed as humanity's friend extending to us a plan of peace. Rather than destruction God gives us a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11):

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23 The theme of the election and the elect is an important one in de' Pazzi's doctrine and deserves to be studied deeply. The centrality of Christ in election is to be found also in the Reformers. See Gibson, *Reading the Decree*, 4-5.

Then he sent the deluge. In this little world the Incarnate Word sent the deluge. And what deluge is this? A superabundance of grace and infusion of his blood, where he drowns all desires, affections and temptations of the soul which are not according to his will.<sup>24</sup>

[...]

And moreover she understood that in the times of Noah God sent the deluge of water, namely of Justice because of the increase of sins in the world; in the present he sent the deluge of mercy with such an abundance of divine knowledge given to creatures, in such a way as when giving many beautiful books and ways of learning how to live spiritually, through divine teachings, participation in the sacraments and other good things God sends nowadays in the world through his infinite mercy. And as all creatures drown in the water's deluge, so they can drown in a deluge of wine, which is the deluge of mercy. However, as all the creatures who entered the ark drowned in the waters sent by God as punishment, so those who enter the ark of the Most Sacred Humanity of Jesus will drown in co-operation with his infinite mercy. In this way they become ready to receive his Blood.<sup>25</sup>

Blood gushing out from the holy wounds as the symbol of life in de' Pazzi's view is intimately bound to mercy. The shedding of the Incarnate Word's blood is the giving of life to us condemned to eternal death. De' Pazzi speaks of 'seeping' mercy, in the same way she speaks of blood flowing from the sacred wounds. She teaches that Jesus' wounds on the Cross gush out 'an abundance of mercy' (read, blood) so that

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24 This text was used in F. Marchese's work, *Unica speranza del peccatore che consiste nel Sangue del Gesù Christo* (Roma 1670, 34), in which in the front piece he shows an etching by Bernini. Recent studies show that Bernini was inspired by the doctrine of Mary Magdalen regarding the flooding or the washing in the Blood of Christ as well as from her drawings about Christ in the mystic winepress. See Stefano Pierguidi, "L'iconografia del 'Sangue di Cristo' del Bernini: Santa Maria Maddalena de Pazzi e il torchio mistico," in [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu) (accessed on March 16, 2016), 103-106.

25 "I Colloqui," 191.

the soul drinks from it becoming ‘with all humility evenly abundant in mercy towards her brethren in material and spiritual needs.’<sup>26</sup> In a very beautiful way, she explains that she aims towards God ‘because anything that emerges from him is justice and so from him mercy is expressed through faith and love towards all sinners.’<sup>27</sup>

In *The Colloquies*, de’ Pazzi considers merciful love gushing out of the Trinity, through the Incarnate Word. Merciful Love is passed on to us through his blessed wounds and from us to all men. Part of this consideration explains that:

She saw the unity of the Most Holy Trinity full of Mercy, infused in the humanified Word. The Word was effusing Mercy through the five wounds as from five beautiful channels diffusing it in all creatures. She saw that everyone was covered in Mercy, both the just and the sinners. Mercy had this effect in the creatures, covering up all their sins, except those of malice and hard-headedness. She saw clearly that mercy, although plentiful, did not cover those creatures where there was no understanding and repentance of sin.

For this reason, these remained out of mercy. She also understood that those creatures who understood and repented of sin were all covered in mercy and were consumed by mercy, as the sea engulfs a drop of water. In these creatures, sin was not visible, but only mercy which covers and consumes in us sin and moreover accompanies us in all our actions. She was given to understand the words of the Psalmist: *Et misericordia tua subsequetur me* (Psalm 22:6). Mercy always cooperates with us in every good thing we do, lending us the hand of divine help. She used to tell us that the mercies of the Lord were infinite as we find in the book of Scriptures. In particular she understood the

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26 “I Quaranta Giorni,” 217.

27 “I Colloqui,” 115.

psalm's verse in the liturgy of hours: *Lucerna pedibus meis verbum tuum; et lumen semitis meis* (Psalm 118, 105). It seems to me (she said) that it was God's great mercy that gave us his Word as lamp and light.<sup>28</sup>

So, it is through this mercy that the malady of sinful indifference is healed. For indifference and a cold heart, God who operates solely for the benefit and good of humanity in Wisdom, namely Christ,<sup>29</sup> gives the medicine of mercy that unwinds the heart (*miseri-cordia*) and moves us towards God and towards our brethren. Indeed such a person

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28 "I Colloqui," 95-96.

29 "I Quaranta Giorni": "Mercoledì 30 Maggio 1584. Dopo essermi comunicata, meditavo le parole del salmista: *Omnia in sapientia tu fecisti*. Mi sembrava che l'eterno Padre facesse tutto con la sua sapienza che altri non era che il suo Figliolo. L'eterno Padre, cioè, operava per mezzo del Figliolo e nella Ss.ma Trinità c'era l'infinita perfezione di tutte le cose. Ne mancava una sola: l'umanità. Perciò il Padre, mandando Gesù a incarnarsi, con la sua sapienza perfezionò e fece sì che nella Ss.ma Trinità vi fosse anche ciò che prima non c'era. L'anima mia vedeva quante cose Dio operava nella sua sapienza unicamente a vantaggio delle creature, dal momento che egli non ne ha affatto bisogno. Vedendo quanto poco le creature conoscono questi benefici e quanto poco amano Dio, per il gran dolore sentivo una pena quasi insopportabile ed ero spinta a dire: "O dolce Dio, quanto è grande la malizia dell'uomo; o amore, perché tanta cecità?" Era tanta la pena e lo slancio che parlavo a voce alta. Mi fu dato di conoscere tutto questo meditando le parole: *Omnia in sapientia tu fecisti*. La mia anima, conoscendo i benefici di Dio, rivolta a lui diceva tutta lieta: *E in bonitate tua sperabo*. Voglio dire che vedevo la bontà di Dio nei nostri riguardi così grande, che riponevo tutta la mia speranza in lui che è la stessa bontà. Vedevo quanto egli aveva fatto per le creature con la sua sapienza, cioè con Gesù, e la sua infinita bontà, e ripeteva spesso le parole: *E in bonitate tua sperabo*. Raccomandando poi le creature a Gesù, terminai come al solito la mia meditazione."



is mystically bonded and conformed with the Triune God: One with the Father through purity, one with the Son through obedience and one with the Spirit through poverty.<sup>30</sup>

## Conclusion

In virtue of the mystery of the incarnation the Trinitarian life and the faithful's participation in it through Christ, in Christ and with Christ, is therefore revealed to us. Christ is uniquely central therefore to both Maddalena and Luther, as Christ is at the core of the Trinitarian Counsel and at the heart of the Church and humanity. Bavnick specifies that the doctrine of Christ is not the starting point, but it certainly is the central point of the whole system of dogmatics. All other dogmas either prepare for it or are inferred from it. In it, as the heart of dogmatics, pulses the whole of the religious-ethical life of Christianity.<sup>31</sup>

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30 "I Quaranta Giorni": "Il primo legame era il voto di castità, mediante il quale ero legata e unita all'eterno Padre che è la purità medesima. Vedevo che la purità era uno dei legami più stretti dell'unione che l'anima può avere con Dio, perché quando è pura l'anima è conforme a Dio. Io gli ero così unita e stretta, che non avrei mai e poi mai potuto separarmi da lui, a meno che fossi caduta nel peccato della carne. Per gli altri peccati il legame della purità non si sarebbe sciolto, ma piuttosto macchiato e così allentato da sembrare pressoché sciolto. Questo legame mi sembrava così prezioso che è impossibile esprimere la sua grandezza e l'unione dell'anima con Dio con linguaggio umano. Mi vedevo poi legata e unita al mio sposo Gesù con il voto di obbedienza, e anche questo legame mi sembrava così grande da non potersi immaginare. Vedendo la preziosità, la grandezza e l'utilità di questa santa virtù, ero tutta dispiaciuta per non averne conosciuto prima a sufficienza l'utilità: essa rende l'anima conforme a Gesù, che è stato tanto obbediente. Se le creature conoscessero la grandezza e l'utilità di questa virtù per l'anima, credo che vorrebbero sottomettersi a ogni creatura, anche la più piccola. Mi sembrava che questa virtù fosse particolarmente necessaria nel Noviziato, ma che le novizie non ne conoscessero il grande valore. Allo Spirito Santo ero legata invece col voto di povertà. Non perché l'anima sia ricolma come lo Spirito Santo di tutti i tesori e le ricchezze celesti, ma come ha detto Gesù nel Vangelo: *Beati pauperes spiritu*, e beate le anime che riconoscono e sanno ricevere e conservare in sé stesse le ricchezze e i tesori dello Spirito."

31 Herman Bavnick, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, vol. 3: *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. Jon Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic 2006), 274.

Both Luther's *Solus Christus* doctrine and the centrality of Christ in de' Pazzi's mysticism are based on the exclusive identity of Christ and his sufficient work. In both, the Person of Christ and his work are one in the Incarnation. The mystery of Christ, "the incarnate Son's life and death reveal who Jesus is and how his divine-human identity is necessary to accomplish our reconciliation."<sup>32</sup>

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32 Stephen Wellum, *Christ Alone. The Uniqueness of Jesus as Saviour*, The Five Solas Series, ed. Matthew Barrett (Zondervan, Nashville 2017), 25.

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