

Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's Parable of the Incarnation and Salvific Redemption: “The Humanified Word,” “the Dry Bleeded Lamb” and “the Created Trinity”¹

In 1953, Samuel Beckett published the third novel *L'Innomable* from what was to be the famous “Trilogy” started with *Molloy* and followed by *Malone meurt*. *L'Innomable* was later translated into English by the author himself. In the post-war period, Beckett published also the famous play *Waiting for Godot* “which had worldwide success in the 1950s.”² Beckett was convinced that the “contemporary

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¹ This paper was originally delivered as two distinct talks in the *Corso Internazionale di Formazione Permanente per le Monache Carmelitane*, hosted in Sassone at the *Istituto Madonna del Carmine. Casa per Convegni e Conferenze Religiose*, Rome (16-27 May 2017). The original titles of the two talks were “*Verbo umanato*” e “*l’Agnello svenato*”: *la parabola dell’incarnazione*, and “*L’uomo “trinità creata*”: *un cammino di trasformazione*. The Carmelite mystic Maria Maddalena de’Pazzi (1566-1607) was born in Florence from the noble family de’ Pazzi. From a young age she dedicated herself to the practice of the spiritual life and later joined the Carmelite monastery of *Santa Maria degli Angeli* in Florence. She is one of the great mystics of the Catholic reformation who deeply longed for the renewal of the Church. Her life was marked by many extraordinary phenomena through which she orally imparted her mystical doctrine which in turn were transcribed by appointed members of her community. She passed away on May 25, 1607 and her “incorrupt” body is still preserved in the Carmelite Monastic Church in Careggi, Florence.

² *Beckett Remembering Remembering Beckett. Uncollected Interviews with Samuel. Uncollected Interviews with Samuel Beckett and Memories of Those Who Knew Him*, ed. James and Elisabeth Knowlson (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), xvii.

malaise” is that which “has been the malaise of all time,” namely that “people are not in touch with their spirit”³ and therefore find themselves out of life itself desperately searching for meaning (through language). He expresses this in his “art of impoverishment” as a sort of apophatic kenosis of the “divine Word who emptied himself, into human likeness to the point of death, even death on a cross as St. Paul says.”⁴

In *L’Innomable*, which is considered by critics to be “Beckett’s most intense and exacting novel,”⁵ the novelist “explores the relationship between the voice and the body through the process of incarnation whereby the dualities of the material and the immaterial are put in question.”⁶ The novel’s protagonist (*Unnamed* and *Unnamable*) in many ways parallels the Incarnate Christ (who is given a Name above all names – Phil 2:9) describing himself as being “in words, made of words, other’s words.”⁷ It is “words” and “language” which declare the protagonist alive so much so that it is “words” or “language” which are the foundation and condition of his existence.⁸ *The Unnamable* is kept presently alive through pronounced words.⁹ Simultaneously, words originate in *the Unnamable*: “language issues from me, it fills me, it clamors against my walls, it is not mine, I can’t stop it, I can’t prevent it, from tearing me, racking me, assailing me.”¹⁰

In *L’Innomable*, Beckett uses specifically theological and religious jargon to describe the duality between the body and the voice (uttering words) pronounced from the body, showing that the voice is inextricably linked to identity and self-naming/self-consciousness.¹¹ *The Unnamed* protagonist has a dual existence, a

³ Ibid., 110-111.

⁴ Paul Rorem, “Negative Theologies and the Cross,” in *Lutheran Quarterly* 23 (2009): 324. Phil 2:7 is the starting point of the Christian theology of *kenosis*.

⁵ Derval Tubridy, “Words Pronouncing Me Alive: Beckett and Incarnation,” in *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd’hui. Beckett and Religion: Beckett/Aesthetics/Politics/ Beckett et la religion: Beckett/L’Esthétique/La Politique* 9 (2000) 95 from pp.93-104. [Accessed 29 November 2020].

⁶ Ibid., 95.

⁷ Samuel Beckett, *The Beckett Trilogy: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (London: Picador 1979), 355.

⁸ Tubridy, *Words Pronouncing Me Alive*, 95.

⁹ Beckett, *The Beckett Trilogy*, 308.

¹⁰ Ibid., 281.

¹¹ Tubridy, *Words Pronouncing Me Alive*, 96. Already Augustine (a great influence on Christian mysticism and on Maddalena’s mysticism) in *De dialectica* delves into the problematic of the relationship between the voice and the word pronounced by the voice from the body, then transcribed and given form in written signs: “A word is the sign of some thing which can be understood by the hearer when pronounced by the speaker. A thing is whatever is felt (sensed) or understood or ‘latent’ (is hidden, inapprehensible). A sign is something which presents itself

voice which translates into a body and a body imbued with a voice. This duality is the source of deep existential uneasiness¹² as *the Unnamable* stands at the threshold of two realities, two worlds: the visible and the invisible, the tangible and the intangible. He is like a tympanum, “as one who exists neither on the inside of the body nor on the outside.”¹³ He says:

There is an outside and an inside and me in the middle, perhaps that's what I am, the thing that divides the world in two, on the one side the outside, on the other the inside, that can be as thin as foil, I'm neither nor the other, I'm in the middle, I'm the partition, I've two surfaces and no thickness, perhaps that's what I feel, myself vibrating, I'm the tympanum, on the one hand the mind, on the other the world, I don't belong to either.¹⁴

to the senses and something other than itself to the mind. To speak is to give a sign in articulate voice. I call that articulate which is capable of being comprised in letters. Whether all these things have been defined correctly or whether they should be followed with other definitions, the section which deals with the discipline of defining will indicate. Now listen attentively to what is coming: Any word 'sonat (sounds; is sounded). Therefore, when it is written it is not a word, but the sign of a word; when the reader sees them, the letters impinge upon the mind, which breaks out in voice. For what else do written letters do but present themselves to the eye and beyond themselves voices to the mind, and we said a little earlier that a sign was something which presented itself to the senses and something other than itself to the mind. What we read then are not words but signs of words. But also, since the letter itself is the smallest part of articulate voice, we misuse this word (letter), when we also call it letter when we see something written, though it is totally silent nor is it a part of 'vox' (voice), but appears as a sign of a part of the 'vox' (voice). Likewise, we also call something written a word, although it is a sign of a word, that is, appears as the sign of significant 'vox' (voice). Thus, as we had just begun to say, every word has sound." *De dialectica*, V. Moreover in a theological context Augustine makes an analogy between the coming forth of the Word and that of human words, the former enfleshed, the latter voiced, implying that the humanity of Jesus is the voice that the Word of God assumed to communicate with human beings: "I am treating of the Word, and perchance the word of men may furnish somewhat like; though very unequal, far distant, in no way comparable, yet something which may convey a hint to you by way of resemblance. Lo, the word which I am speaking to you, I have had previously in my heart: it came forth to you, yet it has not departed from me; that began to be in you, which was not in you; it continued with me when it went forth to you. As then my word was brought forth to your sense, yet did not depart from my heart; so That Word came forth to our senses, yet departed not from His Father. My word was with me, and it came forth into a voice: the Word of God was with the Father, and came forth into Flesh.": 'Sermo' 69, 7. In another instance he presents the Baptist as the voice and Jesus as the Word: 'Sermo' 293, 3, in *PL* 1328-1329.

¹² *Ibid.*, 93.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁴ Beckett, *The Beckett Trilogy*, 352.

Similar dynamic processes we find in Maddalena de' Pazzi's dramatic mysticism. Primarily, in the revolvment around the mystery of the Incarnation voiced into her body. As an example here one can mention that in *Revelatione et Intelligentie* the language used to describe her adherence to God and her total availability echoes the first verses of the Genesis account of creation as well as the Lucan narrative of the Incarnation.¹⁵ Secondly, in the framework of her mysticism of standing in the treshold between two worlds "Maddalena finds herself in a pressing space, suspended between the omnipotence of God's love and her own liminal nothingness."¹⁶ This is even expressed in the constant use of lexical deixis within the textual *corpus* pointing in detail to the time, place, and situation in which Maddalena stands speaks and performs.

From Word to Flesh: A Symbiosis

In Maddalena's mysticism "there appears to be ... a symbiotic relationship between the divine Word and the mystic. Both exist in each other and through each other. The Word discloses to Maddalena that "as much as the creature cannot live without heart, so I (the Word) cannot stay without you every time you

¹⁵ Gen 1:2-3; Lk 1:35. See, Charlò Camilleri, "Ecce venio, venio cito, cito venio' Carried off in the Secret Knowledge of the Paraclete," in *Santa Maria Magdalena de' Pazzi: Imagen y Mistica* (Roma: Edizioni Carmelitane, 2016), 223-240.

¹⁶ Ibid. In particular footnote 23: "This theme is found all through the whole *corpus* of Maddalena. A particular text in *I Quaranta giorni* is totally dedicated to this theme in one of Maddalena's mystical experiences where she "hebbe una vista mirabilissima del conoscimento di se medesima e della suo bassezza, insieme con il conoscimento di Dio e della suo grandezza. Et in tale consideratione cominciò a piangere molto dirottamente, dicendo queste parole: 'O Dio, no' mi mostrar più me, che io non mi posso più vedere..." See, *I Quaranta giorni*, ed. Ermanno Ancilli. Tutte le Opere di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi dai manoscritti originali – 1, directed by Fulvio Nardoni (Florence: Centro Internazionale del Libro, 1960), 249-251. De' Pazzi's writings will be quoted from this seven volumed edition published between 1960-1966, if not otherwise stated. To simplify, only the title of the volume will be given in footnote and the page number. See also Charlò Camilleri, *Union with God as Transformation in Beauty. A Literary-Spiritual Analysis of the Colloquies of Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi (1566-1607)*. Vacare Deo 19 (Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 2008), 39. If not otherwise stated, translations of de' Pazzi's mystical oral texts are mine. In the translation it was opted to leave the oral and complex characteristics of Maddalena's utterings directly transcribed by the *amanuenses* during the altered ecstatic states of conscience of the mystic.

acknowledge your non-being.”¹⁷ Again, the mystic “is conceived and nurtured in your (the Word’s) most sacred mouth”¹⁸ while simultaneously the Word is worded, verbalized, in the mystic’s tongue, voiced in her utterances, and shaped in her bodily performances as in the physical theatre.

Commenting on this mystery, de’ Pazzi explains:

Now it’s your soul-bride’s turn, conceived, nurtured and born at your mouth, to perform the effects done in your mouth. And just as there are in the mouth teeth and lips, to praise you and to sustain the entire body – for with the lips one sucks, and attracts the sweet and most delicate milk, while with the teeth one eats bread and every other type of solid food; so will it be the duty of my poor and glorious soul to do. For it will have to swallow many solid mouthfuls, to overcome all the hellish devils who will be my adversaries.¹⁹

Until this moment Maddalena’s experience consisted primarily in being transformed into a receptacle of the Trinity’s revelation in the Father’s act of pronouncing the Word in the soul as a gift of the Spirit. Echoing the Gospel of John (Jn 1:13), the mystic understands that the soul-bride is “born” in the mouth of the Word. This revelation definitively marks an intense journey which transforms all her being making it a luminous reflection of the same invisible light in such a way that her interior vision was already prepared to receive uninterruptedly for eight days the unfolding of divine clarity before her.²⁰

What becomes clear to Maddalena is the paradox of the Word’s intimate presence in disappearing from the perception of her sentiments and senses. The more the Word moves away (an expression of *kenosis*) and becomes unperceivable to the soul, the more he is with her and she with him.²¹ Paradoxically, the more both annihilate themselves in the mystical fertile nothingness of eternal loving silence, the more they grow and exist in each other and mirror each other.²²

¹⁷ *Revelatione e intelligentie*, 45. Maggi points out that “Maddalena de’ Pazzi is and is not herself. Her being as spatiality, is made of remnants, debris, memories, images of previous performances/performers/narrations. The mystic attempts to ‘utter’ the Word by summoning identities, physicalities, “spaces” that have the consistency of ‘pure’ emptiness.”: Maggi, *Performing/Annihilating the Word*, 123.

¹⁸ *Revelatione e intelligentie*, 47.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁰ Pelagio Visentin, “Introduzione,” in *Revelatione e intelligentie*, 11.

²¹ *Revelatione e intelligentie*, 46.

²² Annihilation is a major theme in de’ Pazzi’s mysticism, running through all her experience and texts. This becomes clearer in the ecstatic experiences of the Passion where Maddalena “contemplates the Lord’s annihilation by participating in it through humility”: Camilleri, *Union with God*, 48. Moreover the annihilation of the Word in Maddalena de’ Pazzi’s mysticism shows

Maddalena's experience is in itself a parable of the Incarnation, the foundational motif of Christianity and more precisely of Catholicism. It is a key element which stands for the turning from word to flesh. The *locus* of this radical *turning from* or *carrying over* is the person of Jesus Christ human and divine, absently present and presently absent, temporal and spiritual, transcendently immanent and immanently transcendent. The Christ event at one time brings to completion the Old Testament revelation of the transcendently immanent God whilst thrusting us into the new waters of a dramatic *mirabile commercium* wherein God and humanity become sharers and partakers of the divine-human properties in such a way that, that which belongs to humanity is taken by the Deity and that which pertains to God is shared by humanity. In the Old Testament God reveals his creative Word. In the New Testament this Word is enfleshed. Although in the Old Testament God is referred to using anthropomorphic imagery,²³ until the Christic subversive revelation the physical body belonged only to man,²⁴ and the unrestricted word (see Isa 55:10-11) belongs only to God. The "unrestricted word" reveals the sovereign omnipotence of God, while the body indicates an existence limited to temporality and liminality. With the incarnation of the *logos* this is radically and subversively changed marking "the dissolution of the boundary between body and voice, permitting a translation back and forth."²⁵

An Essentially Kenotic Process of Redemption

The incarnational process is essentially *kenotic* as the Unrestricted one embraces liminality and restrictedness to space and time. Paradoxically the restricted becomes the locus of the Unrestricted transcending space, time and historical boundaries.

similarities with the *Verbum abbreviatum* of Peter the Hymnographer. See, Pietro il Cantore, *Misericordia e carità. Verbum abbreviatum 95, 98-103*, translated with introduction and notes by Cecilia Falchini (Magnano BI: Edizioni Qiqajon, 2002). Other terms which frequently feature in de' Pazzi's texts are *relassazione* and *amore morto*. See, Camilleri, *Union with God*, 299.

²³ See the seminal study in publication Andreas Wagner, *God's Body. The Anthropomorphic God in the Old Testament* (Bloomsbury: T&T Clark, 2018).

²⁴ This is not to say that the body is evil, as bodily existence is willfully created by God. Bonhoeffer puts it precisely that God willed that there should be human life on earth only in the form of bodily life. See, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (London: SCM, 1955), 131.

²⁵ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 219. From page 210 onwards the author elucidates the radical incarnational "shattering of the categories" which divided the divine and human spheres.

The Incarnation, is the mystery of the enfleshing of the Son of God and is a foundational tenet of Christianity holding that the Word became flesh in the historical Jesus. This tenet of faith is rooted in Biblical revelation, especially in the prologue of St John's Gospel: "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). In *Revelatione et Intelligentie* de' Pazzi links together the *Verbum* with the *Sapientia* and the *Potentia* of the Father and the Spirit.²⁶ The Fourth Gospel draws both on the Greek and Aramaic ways of describing God. In Greek terms Jesus Christ is recognised as the *logos* (principle of order and knowledge) incarnate. Scholars also opined that beneath this identification lies the Aramaic idea of *Memra* (the Word of God, as referred to in the Targum, by which the universe was created and later on recognised by Philo to be the mind of God as revealed in creation).²⁷

²⁶ S. Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, *Revelatione e Intelligentie*, critical edition with adaptations in modern Italian annotaed by Chiara Vasciaveo. Pubblicazioni Archivio Arcivescovile di Firenze Studi e Testi – 23, directed by Gilberto Aranci (Firenze: Pagnini Editore, 2016), 108. De' Pazzi's deep mystical utterings express the classical philosophical tradition with its continuity in the Christian philosophical and theological development. Considering that Marsilio Ficino was tutor of Piero de Messer Andrea de Pazzi (1416-1464), "owner of an excellent library and member of the circle of John Agropulus": Samule Jones Hough, "An Early Record of Marsilio Ficino," in *Renaissance Quarterly* 30, no.3 (1977): 301-304, it would be interesting to analyse De' Pazzi's mystical doctrine with the backdrop of the Renaissance Platonists like Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, especially in their reverberations with the *logos* in John. For the Renaissance Platonists' reverberations see, Alessandro Balbo, "Logos, Ratio, Scientia: una prospettiva rinascimentale," in *Momenti del Logos. Ricerche del "Progetto LERS (Logos, Episteme, Ratio, Scientia) in memoria di Marilena Amerise e di Mrcio Arosio*, eds. Flavia Carderi – Mauro Mantovani – Graziano Perillo (Rome: Edizione Nuova Cultura, 2012), 295.

²⁷ This theory however presents notable weaknesses mainly because "in John, Logos is not just another manner of expressing the divine Name but is a term rich in theological import." See, Martin McNamara, "Logos of the Fourth Gospel and Memra of the Palestinian Targum (Ex 12,42)," *The Expository Times* 79, no.4 (1968): 115–117. McNamara comments however that weaknesses in the argument do not in themselves exclude possible influences on John's usage of the term. See also, Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 43. According to some scholars it was the *logos* and *memra* ideas which paved the way for the Christian Trinitarian doctrine. See, Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 113, and Kaufmann Kohler, *MEMRA* (= "Ma'amar" or "Dibbur," "Logos"), online: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10618-memra> [accessed on 23 april 2017]. Certain utterings in de' Pazzi's Colloquies echo this identification, especially in the *Colloquio quadragesimo ottavo*, where the Eternal Father speaks his Word in words through the mystic's voice after a lengthy contemplation of the death of the Incarnate Word: *I Colloqui II* (vol.3), 285-370.

Jesus Christ, the Word enfleshed, embodies the interchange of the flesh and the word conjoining these two polarities. “The impossibility, yet necessity, of bringing together the word and the body at a single moment of space and time is crucial to Christian belief.”²⁸ It is also the “key to an understanding of Beckett’s prose and drama” as well as and Maddalena’s performative verbo-mystical prophetic drama, brought together here due to the evident process of embodiment that unifies the mind and body of the performer abolishing their separation.²⁹ This process heals, redeems fragmented existence bring it to a unified one. Redemption is in fact central to the mystery of the Incarnation. The Incarnate one “has visited and redeemed his people” (Lk 1:68), in like fashion to the Iohannine theology of the prologue, the rising Sun visits us indicating a saving condescending movement upon us.

The word “incarnation” comes from the Latin *caro* which means “flesh.” Incarnation means the investiture or embodiment in flesh, and also the assumption of, or existence in, a bodily form. The redemptive aspects of incarnation are present in the etymology of the since the (archaic) word “incarn” means to cause flesh to heal over a wound or sore.³⁰

Inspired by Rev13:8, Maddalena finely brings forth this connection by using the expression “dry bled lamb” (*agnello svenato*). “Dry bleeding” is indicative of the *self-emptying*, and the *pouring out* in the *kenosis* of the Word which took visible form in time through the incarnation and death of the Son. In the incarnation the Word poured out itself in human flesh whilst in death, the lamb of God was dry bled on the cross for us. In reality the incarnation and death of the Word enfleshed are temporal expressions of the metaphysical pouring out, self-emptying of the eternal Son in the bosom of the Father. In other words, “the incarnation is not ‘the miraculous metamorphosis of a divine being but the

²⁸ Tubridy, *Words Pronouncing Me Alive*, 94.

²⁹ The process of embodiment here refers to both the wholistic approach of the theory of physical theatre as well as to philosophical phenomenology and theological reflection.

³⁰ Tubridy, *Words Pronouncing Me Alive*, 95. The author reads Beckett’s novel from this perspective stating: “These ideas of incarnation underpin many of Beckett’s works. However, the obligation to give voice through the body is evident especially in *The Unnamable*, *How It Is*, *Not I* and *What Where*, and in each of these works the idea of redemption or salvation is integral to the process of words made flesh.” Ibid.

revelation of God in a historical human being.”³¹ The embodied (*humanato*), wounded (*svenato*) Christ becomes central to belief.³²

The fact that Maddalena uses the words “*humanato*” and “*svenato*” instead of “*incarnato*” and “*sacrificato*” should not pass unobserved as it has great implications, so much so if we consider that she is then convinced that for us to reach God we need to pass through the kenotic imitation of the Word humanified and dry bled. A process she says which cannot be embarked by the Angels of heaven who incessantly contemplate God living in his presence.³³ God pours out himself in broken humanity and in turn broken humanity needs to empty itself to receive God.

This said I tend to believe that Maddalena's theology of the Incarnation is more akin to the kenotic account of this mytery rather than to the classical one.³⁴ In this sense hers is a radical understanding of this mystery expressed in the powerfully radical *humanato* and *svenato* terminology. These terms indicate that for her the Word does not merely assume flesh and is sacrificed in death on a cross, but reveals the eternal humble self-emptying act in the historical form of becoming humanified and subsequently dry bled in his humanity. It is only in virtue of this mystery that we have the certainty of redemption and salvation received by the effusion of the Holy Spirit to whom she says in *Revelatione et Intelligentie*: “You are necessary for the creature in virtue of the Blood poured of the Only-begotten Word.”³⁵

The key to understand more deeply Maddalena's experiential theology of the incarnation, is the idea of *effusion* and/or *infusion* or *inspiratione*.³⁶ It is worth at this point to pinpoint that Maddalena distances herself from the theological theory of the *logos asarkos*, which views the enfleshment of the logos as a contingent historical datum. In Maddalena's vision the incarnation is the mystery

³¹ Karl-Josef Kuschel, *Geboren vor aller Zeit? Der Streit um Christi Ursprung* (Munich/Zurich: Piper, 1990), 495. As quoted in Joseph S. O'Leary, “Rethinking the Incarnation,” *Hermathena*, 152 (Summer 1992): 60.

³² See Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 215-216. Both facets cannot be separated.

³³ See *Avvisi e ammaestramenti*, wherein she shows that our aim in life is that of knowing God, imitate the humanified Word and then serve others.

³⁴ For a detailed discussion on the rival accounts see, Peter Forrest, “The Incarnation: A Philosophical Case for kenosis,” *Religious Studies* 36 (2000): 127-140.

³⁵ *Revelatione e Intelligentie*, 15.

³⁶ Continuously Maddalena refers to this movement of the Father inspiring his Spirit, his life, his light etc... in the soul and in creation.

of the *logos incarnandus*, to use Barthian theology.³⁷ We will not be mistaken to argue that her understanding comes from knowledge of Scripture, especially the letter to the Ephesians, rather than from dogmatic debates.³⁸

Humanity as “Created Trinity.” A Process of Transformation

Maria Maddalena’s doctrine opposes the theological theory of the *logos asarkos*, known as the *extra calvinisticum*, namely the theological speculation about the Unincarnate Word, which in a nutshell holds the Incarnation as an accidental addition to the Son and does not affect the Trinity at all and that the Son’s Divine nature though united with, is not contained in Jesus Christ.

This has created great debates within theology which obviously reflect what image we do have of God in relation to humanity and perhaps whether our understanding of God and humanity are rooted in Biblical Revelation or in metaphysical speculation which might lead to scholastic ratiocination and the danger of fatal speculation. In Catholicism we have similar debates regarding whether the Incarnation was originally in God’s plan or whether the Incarnation was God’s response to the Fall. Alister McGrath cites Robert Jenson’s Trinitarian Theology based on the primacy of revelation rather than on human constructions.

... “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” is a proper name for the God whom Christians know in and through Jesus Christ. It is imperative, (...), that God should have a proper name. Trinitarian discourse is Christianity’s effort to identify God (...) ancient Israel existed and thought within a polytheistic context, in which the term “god” conveyed relatively little information. It was necessary to name and identify the god in question. A similar situation was confronted by the writers of the New Testament, who were obliged to identify the god at the heart of their faith, and distinguish this god from the many other gods worshiped and acknowledged in the region, especially Asia Minor. The doctrine of the Trinity thus identifies and names the Christian God – but identifies and names this God in a manner consistent with the biblical witness. It is not a name which we have chosen; it is a name which has been chosen for us, and which we are authorized to use. In this way, Jenson defends the priority of God’s self-revelation against human constructions of concepts of divinity.³⁹

³⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics Study Edition 24* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 33-34. Maddalena’s vision of the two councils, metahistorical in the trinitarian bosom and historical in the Sinhedrium, is an eloquent plastic example.

³⁸ Johannine Gospel, Epistles, Revelations; Pauline Epistles – Col 1, Eph 1; Heb 1; 1 Pet 1.

³⁹ Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (West Sussex: Wiley/ Blackwell, 2017), 317.

Robert W. Jenson's assertion that "'Before' the existence of the Incarnate there is the eternal triune life, in the actuality of which it is decided that there be a created history and a life of the Son in that history,"⁴⁰ can be considered faithful to biblical revelation not only on God but also on the Christocentric divine-human relationship and communication. This theological viewpoint is "compatible with an ancient model of the Trinity that has the weight of the Augustinian tradition behind it,"⁴¹ and as we all know Augustine's Trinitarian theology lies at the back of Maddalena's contemplation of God and her speaking God. In turn she can speak or utter God because God in the first place spoke and his speech is the Word. Therefore, the Word is that which makes possible communication with God the speaker who communicates. Speaker, Speech, Word Spoken constitute one of the models handed down to us by Augustine on the Trinitarian mystery together with Lover, Beloved, Love. Perhaps these are the two major paradigms we should keep in mind when trying to understand Maddalena's experience of both the Trinity and humanity. "Augustine explicitly transposed this theological affirmation into anthropology by attempting to understand the human person as an image of the Trinity in terms of this idea of God."⁴² Therefore, any form of Christian *anthropos-logos* is by default at its core an echo of trinitarian theology and we dare say the same applies *vice-versa*. The Nicene Creed of 325 embraced the real unity and real diversity within the Trinity and moreover the Church radically defined herself⁴³ as multiplicity (diversity) belongs to unity with the same dignity and not its corruption. The Christian faith as a matter of fact is not faith in one God, but faith in the Triune God. Those who embrace this faith are immersed in the Tri-Unity of God relating always to God the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit, as the Church expresses itself in the liturgy.

⁴⁰ Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology, I: The Triune God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 140.

⁴¹ Oliver D. Crisp, "Concerning the *Logos asarkos*: Interacting with Robert W. Jenson," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 19, no.1 (2015): 39-50.

⁴² Joseph, Cardinal Ratzinger, "Retrieving the Tradition. Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology," *Communio* (Fall 1990): 447. In this article Augustine (as well as Thomas Aquinas), is criticised for "projecting the divine persons into the interior life of the human person and affirmed that intra-psychoic processes correspond to these-persons" which led to the losing our bond into Trinitarian "we" of God and into the "we" of humanity.

⁴³ See Pavel Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground of Truth. An Essay in Orthodox Theodicy in Twelve Letters*, trans. Boris Jakim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 43ff.

In the same fashion, Maria Maddalena, perhaps inspired by the Athanasian *Quicumque vult*,⁴⁴ speaks of God and humanity in her speech on Christ, namely in pronouncing and performing the Word. We know that as from childhood she was impressed by the Athanasian creed and that her first attraction to God took place in the context of speech, therefore of communication: communication between her mother and aunt, between them and her, and between God and her. Indeed, as Hans Urs von Balthasar would later state, “the word of revelation is the word in the form of action: God is understood in the act of self-communication.”⁴⁵ In the *Breve Ragguaglio*, her first biographer informs us that

She was eager to hear speech on God. And therefore when her Mother and her aunt Lady Margherita Buondelmonti, were together talking about God, Lucretia never left them, indeed if sometimes they sent her away to spend time (playing) as a little girl, she used to leave in obedience, but hid herself in some corner where she could hear them and at the same time not be seen: and there she stayed as long as they lasted to speak of God and when they changed subject she left.

And she was not satisfied, at her tender age, to understand merely things capable of her intellection but as I have already stated (from information taken directly from her, finding her unawares), she wanted to understand and kept asking and questioning her Mother in what way the Three Persons are in one God; and how God has always been without beginning and always will be eternal; and also how God, being one, can be everywhere. She used to ask other similar questions, challenging to every mature intellection, let alone to a child, about the greatness of the Holy Trinity. And these were the discussions she often had with her Mother, so much so that she was sometimes forced to silence her, and tell her that she would understand these things as a grown up, and when it pleased God to make her understand. Hence, she would be silent for a moment, only to be drawn by God himself to understand his greatness and lead her where he actually then led her into such high perfection and self-knowledge (as can be seen in her raptures). Often, as I am saying, she used to return to the same reasonings with her Mother, and when she found anything written about the Holy Trinity, she used to be very happy and delighted to read them. Amongst others, once she opened a little book where she found the Symbol of Saint Athanasius and read it with great delight; and it seemed so beautiful to her that she rushed to show it to her Mother so that she would also read it. She often read the said Symbol.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ The *Quicumque vult* composed of 44 statements comprises two sections: 1-29 regarding the Unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity and 30-44 regarding the Incarnation of the Eternal Word in Mary.

⁴⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Ensayos Teológicos I: Verbum Caro*, trans. Andrés Pedro Sánchez Pascual (Madrid: Ediciones Encuentro y Ediciones Cristiandad, 2001), 14.

⁴⁶ *Breve Ragguaglio*, 70-71: “Era desiderosa di sentir’ parlar’ di Dio. E però quando suo Madre e Madonna Margherita Buondelmonti, suo zia, si trovavano insieme a parlar’ di Dio, la Lucretia

“Pronouncing the Word” and “performing the Word” takes a radical form in some texts where in a *dramatis persona* fashion de' Pazzi becomes the Father, also “speaking in his person.” Christ, the pronounced humanified Word is therefore central to Magdalena's experience. In him both God and humanity behold, mirror and recognize themselves and each other.⁴⁷ In *Revelatione e Intelligentie* she tells the Word: “you are the door, o Word, through which we have access to the Father”⁴⁸ as much as he is the Word pronounced by the passionate, eviscerated (*sviscerato*) Father who reveals his proximity to us.⁴⁹ Having stated this, it is clear that, as with the *Quicumque vult*, for Maddalena there is a unity between the Trinitarian mystery and the Christ event. “there where the Word enters, the Trinity that he contains in himself comes in.”⁵⁰

In this sense, the Christ event is the expression of the salvific plan of the Triune God for creation⁵¹ filled with the presence of God, especially in humanity created in the image and likeness of the Divine Tri-unity of Persons. Moreover, Maddalena's contemplation delves deep into the reality of creation in the image and likeness of the Triune God by using the Christological key of the humanified

non si partiva mai da loro, anzi se talvolta la mandavon via a passarsi tempo come piccola fanciullina, essa per obedire si partiva, ma si ascondeva in qualche luogo che le potessi udire e non esser' vista: e quivi stava tanto quanto duravono a parlar' di Dio e quando entravono in altro si partiva... E non si contentava in questa sua piccola età di intendere cose capace a lei, ma come io ho ritratto da lei stessa parlando seco che non se ne accorga, voleva intendere e domandava e interrogava suo Madre in che modo sono Tre Persone e un solo Dio; e come è stato sempre senza principio e sempre sarà eterno; e essendo un solo Dio come può essere in tutti e' lati; e altre cose simile della grandezza della Santissima Trinità, incapace a tutti gli intelletti e molto più all'età puerile. E questi erano è ragionamenti che spesso haveva con suo Madre, a tal' che era sforzata qualche volta a farla tacere, e dirgli che intenderebbe queste cose quando sarebbe grande, e quando piacesse a Dio di fargnene intendere. Essa per all'ora taceva, ma per essere tirata dall'istesso Dio a intendere la suo grandezza per condurla dove poi l'ha condotta a si alta perfetione e cognitione di sé stesso (come si può vedere ne' sua ratti), spesso, dico, ritornava a' medesimi ragionamenti con essa suo Madre. E quando trovava alcuna cosa scritta che parlassi della Santissima Trinità si rallegrava molto e dilettavasi di leggerle. Fra l'altre, aprendo una volta un libriccino, trovò il simbolo di Santo Atanasio e lesselo con grandissimo suo gusto; e parevogli tanto bella cosa, che andò correndo a mostrarlo a suo Madre che lo leggessi ancor' lei, e spesso ritornava a leggere il detto Simbolo.”

⁴⁷ Charlò Camilleri, “To Be is to Gaze and Be Gazed at – Vision in Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's Mysticism,” *Studies in Spirituality* 19 (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 35-46.

⁴⁸ *Revelatione e Intelligentie*, 132.

⁴⁹ *I Quaranta giorni*, 128; *I Colloqui II*, 199

⁵⁰ *Revelatione e Intelligentie*, 132.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 149-150.

Word.⁵² Indeed, she does not stop at the consequences of the divine decision to fashion humanity in its image and likeness (namely the call to communion finding our identity through and in relationships). Rather, echoing inversely Augustine's *De Trinitate*,⁵³ she speaks of a mirroring in the Trinity, namely of a seeing and a recognizing oneself in God,⁵⁴ as much as the Three Divine Persons mirror each other in each other.⁵⁵ I dare to state that de' Pazzi subverts Augustine's method. While he cannot take a look into God himself to see the eternal processions at work (so to speak); he professes to make the attempt to do this in bk VIII and fails; so, he has to go through the looking-glass and see the divine image at work. And what he is really interested in, as he constructs and examines his mental image of the mind's self-memory, self-understanding and self-willing of self-loving, is the way in which these mental acts proceed one from the other, or are generated and conceived one by the other...hoping to find the triune God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in their unity and their "processional" distinction from each other, if he finds and realizes their image in himself.⁵⁶

Maddalena looks into God the "uncreated Trinity" and starting from God she beholds the mystery of humanity as "created Trinity." One can state that while in Augustine's case the starting point is the self's attempt to grasp the divine mystery, in Maddalena's case the starting point is God's revelation which enlightens the human mystery. In my opinion one should not dismiss Maddalena's insistence on "seeing" the Trinity.⁵⁷ At a certain stage there's nothing more to see other than the Trinity and everything in it:

⁵² Luca the Girolamo draws attention on Maddalena's expression *Parola del Verbo*, namely "the Word of the Word" as the *locus* and way of God's manifestation. See *ibid.*, *Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi: Esistenza e Teologia a Confronto*. Vacare Deo-21 (Rome: Edizioni Carmelitane, 2010), 108.

⁵³ Especially Books IX-XVI.

⁵⁴ *La Probatione* II, 102.

⁵⁵ "O che bel circolo è questo della S.ma Trinità, inscrutabile, incomprendibile. In questo circolo vi è uno specchio, un libro e un fonte. Nello specchio devo rimirare, nel libro studiare e nel fonte bagnarmi. Lo specchio sta nel Verbo humanato; il libro nel Padre, cioè nel suo petto; il fonte nello Spirito Santo"; "Onde vedeva quelle tre Divine Persone influirsi l'una l'altra li sua divini influssi, con un modo indicibile. Il Padre influiva al Figliuolo, el Figliuolo rinfluvia nel Padre. Influvia ancora esso Padre et Figliuolo allo Spirito Santo; et esso Spirito santo rinfluvia nel Padre e nel Figliuolo, e continuamente vedeva mandarsi essi divini influssi" (CO I, 114).

⁵⁶ Edmund Hill, "St Augustine's *De Trinitate*. The Doctrinal Significance of its Structure," Manchester University, 1973, 283.

⁵⁷ *I Quaranta giorni*, 111. Vedere, "to see," and all its derivatives, is repeated innumerable times in the *corpus maddalenianum*.

I did not know whether I was dead or alive, , whether I was in body or soul, whether I was on earth or in heaven; I was only seeing God full of glory, in himself, purely loving himself, entirely knowing himself, infinitely capable of himself; purely loving all creatures with infinite love, and being one in Trinity, and indivisible Trinity and one God of infinite love, of supreme goodness, incomprehensible, inscrutable. And this in such a way that for me to be in him, I didn't find anything of me, but I was solely seeing myself in God, without seeing myself, but only God.⁵⁸

In Maddalena's "joyful" and "loving" contemplation⁵⁹ and thought therefore, humanity is not merely called to imitate the Triune life, but more than that, humanity is one, by participation, with the divine Triune life through the humanified Word, with him and in him. This union is so real for her that she dares to state: "Togliamo a Dio quello che è di Dio ogni volta che gli togliamo noi stessi, perché suoi siamo e non nostri: *Empti enim estis, e non estis vestri*" (1 Cor 6:20).⁶⁰

For Maddalena it is in the Trinity that humanity finds its truest identity and purpose. Hence 1) humanity is essentially and not consequentially relational, and 2) transformation is a process of becoming who we really are meant to be. Maddalena professes on Trinity Sunday, she is sealed with the seal of the Trinity, and receives other graces through which "l'anima per quella unione, trasformandosi tutta in Dio, diventa quodammodo immutabile in quella conformità alla volontà di Dio."⁶¹

As the soul is so purified and limpid, without any obstacle or impediment, she not only unites herself and is transformed in God, but becomes also another God (obviously by participation)... As the soul is united to God in this way and transformed in him, she cannot do otherwise than taste God in God and by God. no' può altro gustare che esso Dio in Dio e per Dio. She nourishes herself, and is satisfied and pastures herself of God and is immersed in God.⁶²

In *Revelatione e Intelligentie* she clearly elucidates this "the first innocence, which becomes similar and equal to God, not by nature (essentially) but by participation and grace."⁶³ Already in the eternal trinitarian life, she says,

⁵⁸ *I Quaranta giorni*, 203.

⁵⁹ See Bruno Secondin, *Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. Esperienza e dottrina. Vacare Deo -5* (Rome: Edizioni Carmelitane, 1974), 306.

⁶⁰ *I Colloqui II*, 173.

⁶¹ *I Quaranta giorni*, 189.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 218.

⁶³ *Revelatione e Intelligentie*, 285.

“the human idea was conceived.”⁶⁴ Maddalena here seems to echo Tertullian’s prosopographic exegesis⁶⁵ in *Adversus Praxeas*⁶⁶ for example, where “one sees how the phenomenon of intra-divine dialogue gives birth here to the idea of the person who is person in an authentic sense.”⁶⁷ And this “grew out of the idea of dialogue, more specifically, it grew as an explanation of the phenomenon of the God who speaks dialogically. The Bible with its phenomenon of the God who speaks, the God who is in dialogue, stimulated the concept “person.”⁶⁸ This has a great theological implication as Maddalena seems to argue and hold that humanity makes visible in space and time the eternal metaphysical Trinitarian life. This she sees as the “greatness” of humanity. For her the human person is the bridge of peace between God and creation “being created as a new trinity so that in humanity this peace could be bestowed”⁶⁹ since there was no-thing in creation which could receive it.

The apex and completion of this unfolding of the Trinitarian dialogic revelation, which starts in the God’s Throne and proceeds in the Word, becomes visible in space and time in the Word humanified in the womb of the Virgin Mary. No wonder therefore that Maddalena’s theological anthropology of the “created Trinity” finds its place primarily in *Revelations and Enlightenment*. The structure of this week-long (8 day) liturgical experience and consequently of the transcribed text takes the form of two mirroring panels forming a diptych showing on one side the mystery of the operations of the Spirit in the Incarnate Word and on the other in that of Creation.⁷⁰ More precisely the operations of the Spirit in the Word made flesh overflow in the entirety of humanity.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 77.

⁶⁵ Mostly in the exegetical interpretation and understanding of the “we” used by God in the creation narrative of Genesis.

⁶⁶ Praxeas, a Monarchian, who believed in the unity of the divine substance Godhood or Godhead refuting the three distinctive divine persons of the Father, Son and Spirit. It is in the *Adversus Praxeas* that the idea of “person” moves a way from mere “roles” played by actors to true dialogic realities, i.e.: persons.

⁶⁷ Joseph, Cardinal Ratzinger, *Retrieving the Tradition*, 442.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 443.

⁶⁹ *Revelatione e Intelligenzie*, 77.

⁷⁰ Albert Verbrugge did try to give a concise structure to *Revelatione* limiting himself however to summarise the contents of each day and night selecting and distinguishing the respective roles of the Three Divine Persons. See Verbrugge, *The Image of the Trinity*, excerpta ex dissertation (Rome: PUG, 1983), 70-71. Of the same author see also, “Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi (santa),” in *Dizionario di Mistica* (Città del Vaticano, LEV, 1998), 788-791; “Saint Mary Magdalen de Pazzi and Her Quest for the Trinity,” *Carmel in the World* XLV, no.2 (2006): 90-102. On the contrary what is proposed here is to focus on the initial idea which inspired the mystic’s exposition in

De' Pazzi's journey in *Revelations* is a liturgy in itself through which she will follow that of Christ who, filled with the Holy Spirit, births the soul-bride through *kenotic* pain and suffering culminating in the mystery of the Cross. The convergence in the text of the notions of "pain," "giving birth," and the empty fructile abyss lead us to the birth pangs paradigm which is latent at the background of the the *Revelatione e intelligente*, *Probatione* and *La Renovazione della Chiesa* volumes. In these three successive texts the mystic experiences re-birth as "a new trinity"⁷¹ in memory, intellect and will, by the will of the Father, the *kenosis* of the Son, through the power of the Holy Spirit, receiving the gift daily in Pentecost tide. She then suffers birth pangs in the *Probation* period and births the project for the renewal of the Church in the *Letters on the Renewal of the Church*.⁷² In Maddalena's mysticism in fact it is in the contemplation of the Christ as the humanified word and the dry bled lamb that the renewal of the Church is made possible.

As with Pauline and Johannine theology of creation in the Word, through the Word and for the Word creation is possible in Maddalena creation and therefore the entire story of salvation makes sense only in the light of the Christ event. The Christ event therefore does not constitute a second plan but stands "*ab eterno*" (RE 76) in the *consilium trinitatis*. Maddalena is radical in this conviction:

It semmed to me that the Father did everything through his Wisdom, who I saw was his Son. This means that the eternal Father worked through his Son, and that in the Most Holy Trinity resides the infinite Perfection of all things. Only one thing was lacking (in his being), and this was humanity. So, the eternal Father, sent Jesus to be incarnated, and through his Wisdom came to perfect and place in the Most Holy Trinity that which was not there in the first place.⁷³

Therefore, to hold that the incarnation was some sort of a second plan because of human sin would undermine the theology of creation and faith in a God who is self-less communication.

the particular days and nights considering that the Octave of Pentecost provided a liturgical structure for the week. From this exercise, a reworked and intensified structure in Maddalena's mystagogical exposition emerges.

⁷¹ *Revelatione e intelligente*, 77.

⁷² Already in the literary-spiritual analysis of the Colloquies and in the analysis of the *Probatione*, I propose to consider the entire *corpus* as one text for a proper understanding of de' Pazzi's mystical journey in the great period of ecstasies and phenomena. See Camilleri, *Union With God*, 257-260; Camilleri, "Longing for God. Purgatory as Paradigm in Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi (1566-1607)," *Carmelus* 54, no.1 (2007): 67-102.

⁷³ *I Quaranta giorni*, 101-102.

Great is the human dignity as “created trinity”! So great that humanity can fall into the trap of coming up with something other than God’s plan of salvation, repeating the Fall: proud humanity “convened a council which was all the contrary to that convened by God. Full of pride with itself humanity wanted to become greater than God who created her, thinking that by eating from the prohibited tree, she could become another God.”⁷⁴ Pride pushes us into illusion, tearing us not only from God but also from our true self. Fallen humanity “found herself in everything on the contrary of what she expected. Instead of being exalted, she found herself annihilated in such a state that not only she did not become God but made herself incapable of understanding God and receive in herself his gifts”⁷⁵ with the effect of becoming such “a dark creature for her lost innocence and the sin committed, and also for the great blindness through which she couldn’t see the misery she found herself in. In this way humanity couldn’t heal herself or come out of this condition.”⁷⁶

Concluding Remarks

To Maddalena the mystery of the Humanified Word is central both doctrinally and experientially. To be herself the effusion, in the community and in the Church, of the humanified Word was indeed her life project in Carmel as her religious name reveals: *Maddalena del Verbo Incarnato*. It is my conviction that only within the context of this “project” that we can understand hagiographical details surrounding Maddalena’s constant propensity to be one with the marginal (poor children, prisoners, lay nuns, the ailing and the diseased with contagious infections. Her presence is presented as an unfailing source of life, redemption and healing. Her nearness echoes Christ’s “proximity to the poor, to prostitutes, to robbers, to the rich, and, perhaps most important, to the sick entails the risk of contamination that is only a re-enactment within the realm of ordinary action of the incomprehensibly large risk of the initial taking on of a body.”⁷⁷

This should be true for us and the Church: to embody Christ as without the constant humanization of the divine Word in history and in the life of the believers, the Word remains absent and intangible in the present world.⁷⁸ This

⁷⁴ *Revelatione e Intelligentie*, 160-161.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁷⁷ Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 215.

⁷⁸ See Mark Smith, “The Three Bodies of God in the Hebrew Bible,” in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 134, no.3 (2015): 471-488. The author analyses three types of “bodies” which indicate

is perhaps the greatest legacy of Maddalena's parable of the humanified Word and Dry bled Lamb: reminding us of our call to allow the Word to become human in us, a human face to a fallen disfigured world. It is in this world that the ecclesia is called to witness the God who does not lose heart but re-creates the created Trinity through the Incarnation of the humanified Word. From Maddalena's viewpoint (as with Carmelite mysticism in general) the Incarnation is so central that creation is understood to be created in view of the Incarnation and the Incarnation becomes the re-creation of creation. It is against this backdrop that mystical transformation becomes understandable as the *mirabile commercium* where the divine *kenosis* (in de' Pazzi's imagery *svisceramento*) of the Triune God (based on the notion of personhood, therefore in relatedness) is revealed in the humanified and bled dry Word, while the *kenosis* (self-emptying) of human nature becomes the condition of open receptivity to the overflowing Trinitarian divine life.

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God's presence in the Old Testament revelation: the "human" body; the "liturgical" body; and the "mystical" body. The theology of the Incarnation takes these typologies to another level.