

LONGING FOR GOD - PURGATORY AS PARADIGM
IN SANTA MARIA MADDALENA DE' PAZZI (1566-1607)

Now, for seven days and seven nights
no man came nigh the Garden,
and he was alone with his memories and his pain:
for even those who heard his words with love and patience
had turned away to the pursuits of other days.
Only Karima came, with silence upon her face like a veil;
and with cup and plate within her hand,
drink and meat for his aloneness and his hunger.
And after setting these before him, she walked her way.¹

I. PREAMBLE

Setting the Context

On 14th June 1587, Alamanno de' Pazzi, brother of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi and commander of Tuscany's military forces died.² During this time the Carmelite mystic was passing from her own spiritual battle, journeying through a period of spiritual desolation which began on 16th June 1585 and which will only come to an end five years later, on 10th June 1590. We know almost noth-

¹ KAHLIL GIBRAN, *Il Giardino del Profeta*, in *Il Profeta - Il Giardino del Profeta*, translated by Valentina Colombo, Milano 2002², p. 216. This edition contains also the original text in English.

² Alamanno passes away, according to Florentine time, at the eighth hour (2.00 am). Cf. *La Probatione* I, edited by Giuliano Agresti, in *Tutte le opere di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi dai manoscritti originali*, directed by Fulvio Nardoni, vol. 5, Florence 1965, 32. Hereafter *La Probatione* I, p. 42. He was younger than Maria Maddalena, the fourth Child of Messer Camillo di Geri de' Pazzi (1535-1597) and Maddalena Maria di Messer Lorenzo Buondelmonti (...1590). In the family there were four children: Geri (1561-1618), Catherina (1566-1607), Braccio (1567- ?) and Alamanno († 1587). Cf. MARIA PACIFICA DEL TOVAGLIA, *Breve Ragguaglio della vita della Santa Madre*, edited by Ermanno del SS. Sacramento, in *Tutte le opere di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi dai manoscritti originali*, vol. 1, directed by Fulvio Nardoni, Florence 1960, p. 69. Hereafter *Breve Ragguaglio*.

ing about the first two years of this spiritual desolation period, described by the saint as the lion's den (*il lago dei leoni*). The saint, on discovering certain journals containing accounts of her tribulations compiled by Sister Costanza Morelli, "without even bothering to read them, she secretly threw them all in fire and burnt them".³ However, Mother Vangelista del Giocondo commissioned Sister Maria Pacifica del Tovaglia to rewrite whatever she remembered of the past two years and subsequently to give an account of the future happenings.⁴ During this period, precisely in 1586, the Lord commissions the ecstatic to write and send letters about the renewal of the Church to the Pope, the cardinals, the archbishop of Florence and to superiors and members of various religious Orders and Congregations, namely Jesuits, Dominicans and others. To some, the vibrant mystical experience together with the compilation of letters about the renewal of the Church, do not fit the obscure "purification period endured by Maddalena".⁵ However, it could be said that the explicit cry for the renewal of the Church befits well this period of probation. Indeed the twelve letters recorded in a separate manuscript called *La Renovazione della Chiesa* are nonetheless a desperate invitation for personal and institutional purification. In fact in the text of *La Probatione*, de' Pazzi asserts the necessity of reform in Carmel whilst revealing her desire to "sanctify the house of Mary".⁶ Only through interior purification the work of renewal could ever be successful.⁷ The accounts, to be found in *La Probatione*, present the reader with a model of a Christian who takes seriously and personally the need of purification. Highly significant is the fact that at the beginning of the account concerning the five years of probation the saint is presented to us battling against

³ *La Probatione* I, p. 32. Sister Costanza Morelli during the beatification process testifies that "Havendo una volta trovato alcuni suoi estasi scritti da me gl'abbrucchiò". Cf.: *Summarium actionum, virtutum et miraculorum servae dei Mariae Magdalenae de Pazzis Ordinis Carmelitarum ex processu remissoriali desumptorum*, edited by Ludovico Saggi, O.Carm., (=Archivium Historicum Carmelitanum II) Rome 1965, p. 147. Hereafter *Summarium*.

⁴ *La Probatione* I, p. 31.

⁵ BRUNO SECONDIN, *Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi. Esperienza e dottrina* (=Vacare Deo 5), Rome 1974, p. 134.

⁶ *La Probatione* I, p. 80.: "T voglio andare a santificare l'abitacol di Maria". Other references to the monastery's reform are to be found in pages 75-81, 94-107, 110-112.

⁷ Cf. *La Renovazione della Chiesa*, edited by Fausto Vallainc - Claudio Maria Catena, in *Tutte le opere di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi dai manoscritti originali*, directed by Prof. Fulvio Nardoni. vol. 4, Florence 1966, pp. 47, 56. Hereafter *La Renovazione della Chiesa*.

the sin of impurity by “acting similarly to saint Benedict” and, with the help of the Blessed Virgin, overcoming temptations “like saint Thomas Aquinas”.⁸ Consequently, the text of *La Probatione* presents Maria Maddalena as a model figure, who embodies the fierce battle with evil forces to obtain the ideal of purity necessary to the mystical body of Christ.

Though Maria Maddalena is subjugated by diabolical and evil oppressions, like the agonizing Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, she nonetheless overcomes this coercion and finally participates in Christ’s victory and glorification.⁹ As understood by the saint herself, the aim of the probation is to sustain the militant Church in the work of renewal.¹⁰ Indeed, the virtuous lifestyle of Maria Maddalena is a source of renewal and purification for others. On this matter, in the text of *La Probatione* the reader will encounter with a particular case of a troublesome nun whom the mystic sees as being tightly held by the devil. After many futile attempts, on the part of both the monastery’s confessor and the superiors, to correct the nun’s behaviour through counselling and support, the aforementioned nun was led to amend her lifestyle through the “anxious desire for the salvation of souls and the great love of neighbour”¹¹ shown by Maria Maddalena who offered prayers and suffered penances for her. Sister Maria Pacifica del Tovaglia explains that “With God’s grace and for the prayers of our blessed Daughter, this nun corrected herself and now she lives quietly in holy religion, not being anymore of a burden to superiors as she was in the past”.¹² This narrative, together with accounts of various prodigies worked by de’ Pazzi between 1591 and 1601, recorded at the end of the manuscript after the probation period, transforms *La Probatione* into a hagiographical account of a “living saint”.¹³ The theory behind this study is that the image of purgatory proves to be a parabolic illustration of what was going on in Maria Maddalena’s interiority. Hence, the purgatory metaphor appears to be

⁸ *La Probatione* I, p. 34.

⁹ *Colloquio Quinquagesimo*, in *I Colloqui II*, edited by Claudio Maria Catena, O.Carm., in *Tutte le opere di Santa Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi dai manoscritti originali*, directed by Fulvio Nardoni, vol. 3, Florence 1963, p. 385. Hereafter *I Colloqui II*.

¹⁰ *I Colloqui II*, p. 409.

¹¹ *La Probatione* II, p. 11.

¹² *La Probatione* II, p. 12.

¹³ ARMANDO MAGGI, *Satan’s Rhetoric. A Study of Renaissance Demonology*, Chicago 2001, p. 177. Indeed, in some instances Maria Maddalena is explicitly described as saint. Cf. *La Probatione* II, p. 238.

the catalyst through which the saint and her community are enabled to give meaning to a rather meaningless behavioural pattern in the saint's life. Thus, the image of purgatory sets the parameters for both the understanding and interpretation of the dreadful five year period of *La Probatione* endured by the mystic.

For a better understanding of the saint's experience, this study, briefly explores the Catholic Church's understanding of purgatory especially in de' Pazzi's time as well as the significant Carmelite notion of the spiritual life as a progressive journey of purification. The study then proceeds with an analysis of Maria Maddalena's thought and experience on this matter in the light of other writings on the state of purgation.

II. THE QUESTION OF PURGATORY

Historical and Doctrinal Development: An Overview

The *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* defines purgatory as the "intermediary state where the souls of people who die in a state itself intermediary, find themselves".¹⁴ These are the souls of those passed away being close to the Lord, but who nonetheless did not live in perfect charity. Thus, these souls need an ultimate purification meant to make them apt to behold the vision of the Most Holy God. Gradually, Christian faith came to understand this *state* of purification in terms of a *place* where purification is realized, just as heaven and hell were accordingly understood as places of beatitude and damnation. However, whilst heaven and hell are definitive destination points of arrival, purgatory is a transitory state of being in view of a future everlasting beatitude. The very concept of a possible intermediate state of cleansing reveals a revolution in the way humanity perceived itself. Before the emergence of Christianity, pagan and Old Testament beliefs were convinced that there was an abyss dividing heaven and earth, the divine sphere from the human sphere. Even after death, man would not ascend to heaven, but descend to hell (*Inferi* or *Sheol*). Believing in Christ who ascended to heaven after descending in hell, Christianity encouraged humanity to aspire towards the heavenly spheres. Purgatory, as an intermediate state confirms this ideal of a

¹⁴ *Le Purgatoire*, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, Ascétique et Mystique* XII, 2562. For the question of purgatory I rely mostly on the article in the *DSAM*.

spiritual and moral ascension which gradually leads humanity towards heaven.¹⁵

Although purgatory is not explicitly mentioned in Sacred Scriptures, the theology of purgatory is nonetheless rooted in particular texts of the Old and New Testaments (cf. *2Macc* 12, 39-46; *Lk* 12, 48; 16, 9; *1Cor* 3, 11-15; 15, 29; *2Tim* 1, 16-18). Subsequently, the Fathers of the Church believe in both the efficacy of prayers for the departed and in the necessity of purification of souls after death. However it is only with Augustine that the term purgatory began to be used in theological formulas like *ignis purgatorius*, *poenae purgatoriae* and *loca purgatoria*. Although from the sixth century it was customary to hold a commemoration for the deceased, St. Odilo of Cluny († 1048) encouraged the spreading of this usage by establishing for his monastery the annual liturgical commemoration of the beloved departed souls. By the thirteenth century this feast spread to the whole of western Christianity. The term *purgatorium* then appears for the first time in the twelfth century with Bernard of Clairvaux and others. Well-known is the famous *Purgatory of Saint Patrick*, which epitomizes similar texts about this argument. The fourteenth century saw the crystallization of pre-Christian and Christian notions of life after death with Dante Alighieri's *Divina Commedia*.¹⁶

The import of the Magisterium on the question of purgatory goes back to the thirteenth century. On the 6th March 1254 Pope Innocent IV addressed the letter *Sub catholicae professione* to the Bishop of Tuscanum about certain controversies with the Greeks. In *De sorte defunctorum*, Innocent IV states that the place of purification should be called "Purgatory".¹⁷ Subsequently, in 1274, in the fourth session of the Second Council of Lyons, the Byzantine Emperor's *Professio Fidei*, professes the belief that those who died in a state of charity, truly contrite for their sins, but before having brought forward fruit

¹⁵ JACQUES LE GOFF, *La nascita del purgatorio*, Torino 1996², p. 5.

¹⁶ DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Divina Commedia. Inferno-Purgatorio-Paradiso*, with an introduction by Italo Borzi and a critical commentary by Giovanni Fallani – Silvio Zennaro, Rome 1999, p. 28. Recent studies by Maria Corti revealed also influences from *Stairway to Heaven*, an Arabic account of Mohammed's ascension to heaven. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁷ INNOCENTIUS IV, *Ep. "Sub catholicae professione" ad episcop. Tuscanum*, *Ap. Sedis legatum apud Graecos* (6 Mart. 1254), in *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, 36th edition by Henricus Denzinger and Adolfus Schönmetzer s.i, Rome 1966, 838.: "Nos, quia locum purgationis huiusmodi dicunt non fuisse sibi ab eorum doctoribus certo et proprio nomine indicatum, illum quidem iuxta traditiones et auctoritates sanctorum Patrum 'Purgatorium' nominantes volumus, quod de cetero apud ipsos isto nomine appellatur". Hereafter *Denzinger*.

worthy of repentance, “*eorum animas poenis purgatories seu cathar-
teriis[...], post mortem purgari*”.¹⁸ This profession of faith explains that
the *suffragia* of the faithful for the departed include the “*Missarum
scilicet sacrificia, orationes et eleemosynas et alia pietatis officia, quae a
fidelibus pro aliis fidelibus fieri consueverunt secundum Ecclesia
instituta*”.¹⁹ However, the first dogmatic formulation on the matter
was articulated during the Council of Florence of 1439, in the
Decretum pro Graecis. The formulation substantially repeats the text
of the 1247 *Professio Fidei*.²⁰ The sixteenth century abuses gave rise to
the Reformation protest against the traffic of indulgences.²¹ In
response to Luther’s teachings expressed in his 95 theses, Pope Leo X,
on the 15th June 1520, issued the Bull *Exsurge Domine* condemning 41
propositions of Luther’s theses against purgatory and indulgences.
Subsequently in 1547 the Council of Trent does mention purgatory in
the *Decretum de Iustificatione* declaring that there is also the remission
of faults in purgatory.²² Subsequently, Session XXV of the Council,
whilst obliging the bishops to exclude all that may induce to error and
superstition from their preaching on the matter, in the *Decretum de
purgatorio* confirms the existence of Purgatory, and also that the souls
detained there are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, principally
by the sacrifice of the altar.²³ In the same session the Council defines
indulgences as being beneficial to Christians (*christiano populo
maxime salutarem*) so they should be retained by the Church (*in
Ecclesia retinendum*).²⁴

Spiritual Purging Fires: Via Purgativa

On the popular level, the concept of a state and place for purifi-
cation developed a “geography” of purgatory which would represent

¹⁸ *Professio fidei Michaelis Palaeologi imperatoris*, in *Denzinger*, 856.

¹⁹ *Professio fidei Michaelis Palaeologi imperatoris*, in *Denzinger*, 856.

²⁰ *Bulla unionis Graecorum “Laetentur caeli”* (6 Iul 1439), in *Denzinger*, 1304-1306.

²¹ At first Luther seems to have hesitated as to whether retaining or not the doctrine of purgatory, however in 1530 he rejected this doctrine together with the expiatory value of the Eucharist and the indulgences. Subsequently Calvin would vigorously deny the doctrine of purgatory. It could be said that while Luther’s protest brought about a structural reform in the Church, Catholic Reformers insisted on the need of interior conversion and purification.

²² *Canones de Iustificatione* (13 Ian. 1547), in *Denzinger*, 1580: “*ut nullus remaneat reatus poenae temporalis, exsolvendae vel in hoc saeculo vel in futuro in purgatorio, antequam ad regna caelorum aditus patere possit*”.

²³ *Decretum de purgatorio*, (3 Dec. 1563), in *Denzinger*, 1820.

²⁴ *Decretum de indulgentiis*, (4 Dec. 1563), in *Denzinger*, 1835.

realistically the purging pains of the souls in the state of purification. To this, one has to mention the development of the popular accounts of visions and journeys in the realm of the dead.²⁵ For example in various rich and complex accounts of women visionaries, the consideration of the process of purgation and atonement for sin, through punishment and redemptive suffering characterised by a longing for God, include the notion of a geography of the afterlife.²⁶ This is understandable, since the human person grasps ideas and concepts through images and symbols. Perhaps Dante is the first to imagine purgatory as a lofty terraced island-mountain consisting of seven levels rising from the ground one above the other reaching the Garden of Eden, from which purified souls ascend to Heaven. Yves Congar notes that this is an image which reminds us of the earthly mystical ascent of Mount Carmel where souls pass through the nights of the senses, of the spirit, of memory and will.²⁷ Indeed Carmelite spirituality puts forth the necessity of purification and transformation which enable the soul's union with God. Carmelites embark on this journey of a gradual emptying and stripping of the old self, "so that we may be clothed in Christ and filled with God".²⁸ The end product of this ascetic journey is the full transformation in God so that we may begin to "reflect something of God's infinite beauty".²⁹ This contemplative journey is characterised by a continual search for the face of the living God.³⁰ Blessed Titus Brandsma, referring to the double spirit presented in the *De Institutione primorum monachorum*, speaks of "the harmonious union of the human exercise of virtue and the divine infusion of mystical life; the union of the *via purgativa* and *illuminativa* with the *via unitiva* [...]. Our sufferings and sacrifices, our labours and exercises in prayer and virtue will be rewarded by God with the beatifying vision of His love and greatness".³¹ Indeed, all the significant mystical teachers of Carmel write about this spiritual

²⁵ LE GOFF, *La nascita del purgatorio*, pp. 108ff, 172-234.

²⁶ Cf. JANE F. MAYNARD, *Purgatory: Place or Process? Women's views on Purgatory in 14th-15th Century (Britain)*, in *Studies in Spirituality* 12/2002, pp. 104-125.

²⁷ *Le Purgatoire*, in *DSAM* XII, 2658.

²⁸ *Ratio Institutionis Vitæ Carmelitanae. Carmelite Formation: A Journey of Transformation*, Rome 2000, I/2, p. 27. Hereafter *RIVC*.

²⁹ *RIVC*, I/2, p. 29.

³⁰ *Constitutiones Ordinis Fratrum Beatissimæ Virginis Mariæ de Monte Carmelo* (1995), 14: A.O.Carm 47/1 (1996), p. 12.

³¹ TITUS BRANDSMA, O.Carm., *Carmelite Mysticism Historical Sketches*, Chicago/IL 1936, pp. 10-13.

purification. John of the Cross insists on the necessity of purification in the journey towards union with God. One cannot obtain this union without remarkable purity so as to arrive at the top of the “mountains and the hill” of divine union and transformation. Before union, the soul must pass deep into the thicket of the purest suffering that is, even the agony of death in order to see God.³² Passing through this thicket the soul abandons itself in God’s purifying love.

Thus, from the part of the soul, this “abandonment is experienced subjectively as the fire of Hell, but from God’s perspective it is the fire of Purgatory”.³³ John of the Cross insists that God purifies us in order to make us gods by participation to the point of divinisation through Jesus Christ.³⁴ In fact, in the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, John of the Cross tries to attract our attention towards the “counsel of our Saviour on self-denial”,³⁵ to avoid falling into the trap of seeking the self in God.³⁶ This is nothing more than an annihilation “similar to a temporal, natural and a spiritual death in everything [...] For on this road, as our Saviour affirms, there is room only for self-denial, and the cross, which is the supporting staff that greatly lightens and eases

³² John of the Cross, *Noche oscura* II/24,4: “No se puede venir a esta unión sin gran pureza, y esta pureza no se alcanza sin gran desnudez de toda cosa criada y viva mortificación”; *Cántico espiritual* (CB) 36, 11-12: “Y por eso, en gran manera desea el alma engolfarse en estos juicios y conocer más adentro en ellos; [...] por las angustias y trances de la muerte, por verse más adentro en su Dios. Donde también por esta espesura en que aquí el alma desea entrar, se entiende harto propiamente le espesura y multitud de los trabajos y tribulaciones en que desea esta alma entrar; [...] porque el más puro padecer trae mas íntimo y puro entender” in *Obras completas* edited by Maximiliano Herráiz, Salamanca 2002³, pp. 541-542, 742-743. Hereafter: *Obras*.

³³ HANS URS VON BALTHASAR, *The Glory of the Lord. A Theological Aesthetics*, III: *Studies in Theological Style: Lay Styles*, translated by Andrew Louth - John Saward - Martin Simon, edited by John Riches, San Francisco 1986, p. 111. Hereafter: *The Glory of the Lord*.

³⁴ LUIGI BORRIELLO - GIOVANNA DELLA CROCE, *Conoscere Dio è la vocazione dell'uomo. Linee di antropologia mistica in San Giovanni della Croce*, with an introduction by Alvaro Huerga, Milano 1991, p. 163.

³⁵ *Subida del Monte Carmelo* II,7.5: *Obras*, p. 210.: “¡Oh, quién pudiera aquí ahora dar a entender y a ejercitar y gustar qué cosa sea este consejo que nos da aquí nuestro Salvador de negarnos a nosotros mismos, para que vieran los espirituales cuán diferente es el modo que en este camino deben llevar que del muchos de ellos piensan!” Hereafter *Subida*.

³⁶ *Subida* II, 7.5: *Obras*, p. 211.: “En lo cual, espiritualmente, se hacen enemigos de la cruz de Cristo; porque el verdadero espíritu antes busca lo desabrido en Dios que lo sabroso, y más se inclina al padecer que al consuelo, y más a carecer de todo bien por Dios que a poseerle, y a las sequedades y aflicciones que a las dulces comunicaciones, sabiendo que esto es seguir a Cristo y negarse a sí mismo, y esotro, por ventura, buscarse a sí mismo en Dios, lo cual es harto contrario al amor”.

the journey”³⁷ to a holiness which “has no other origin except the imitation of Christ, the total stripping away of everything”.³⁸ In John of the Cross’ teaching Mary becomes the model of the purified soul that is in a state of total adherence to God.³⁹

Even Teresa of Jesus in the *First Dwelling Place* of the *Interior Castle*, describes the soul in her efforts to purify itself from sin and imperfections so that the splendour and glory of the Lord would be revealed in her. In this effort Teresa advises those journeying on the spiritual path, to take the Blessed Mother as an intercessor who fights for them against the snares of the devil.⁴⁰ This is to say that in the spiritual journey of transformation the Blessed Mother confirms us in our vocation to holiness, obtaining for us “the gifts necessary for that difficult yet holy ascent towards divine things and towards the ineffable experience of dark nights and light-filled days”. It is she who gives us “a thirst for holiness and a desire to bear eschatological witness to the kingdom of heaven” leading us “into that possession of Christ and his glory”.⁴¹ Attracted by the fragrant scent of the Immaculate Virgin, we can do nothing else than desire all that translucence she received from God.⁴²

This age-long spiritual experience found its symbolic expression in the Scapular, which throughout the ages was imbued with mythical stories, making of it, not without controversies and abuses, an

³⁷ *Subida* II, 7.6-7: *Obras*, pp. 211-212.: “Ella, cierto, ha de ser como una muerte y aniquilación temporal y natural y espiritual en todo [...] pues en él no cabe más que la negación, como da a entender el Salvador; y la cruz, que es el báculo para poder arribar, por el cual grandemente la aligera y facilita”.

³⁸ BALTHASAR, *The Glory of the Lord*, III, 126-127.

³⁹ Cf.: *Subida* III, 2.10: *Obras*, pp. 324-325. In the Carmelite spiritual tradition, the *puritas cordis* ideal was always understood as an imitation of Mary’s purity understood more as total adherence to God rather than corporal integrity. Cf. CHRISTOPHER O’DONNELL, O.CARM., *Loving Presence: Mary and Carmel. A Study of the Marian Heritage of the Order* (=Carmelite Spiritual Directory Project: Horizons - 6), pp. 39, 48-50.

⁴⁰ Teresa of Jesus, *Moradas del castillo interior*, 1/2,12 in *Obras completas*, transcribed with introduction and notes by Efren de la Madre de Dios, O.C.D. - Otger Steggnik, O.Carm. (=B.A.C) Madrid 2003⁹, p. 479.: “Las que se vieren en este estado han menester acudir a menudo, como pudieren, a Su Majestad, tomar a su bendita Madre por intercesora y a sus santos para que ellos peleen por ellas, que sus criados poca fuerza tienen para se defender” .

⁴¹ Chosen texts from the *Allocutions of Pope Paul VI* for the second reading in the Office of Readings for the Solemn Commemoration of Our Lady of Mount Carmel as published in the *Carmelite Proper of the Liturgy of the Hours*.

⁴² John of St. Samson, *La morte e la gloriosa assunzione al cielo empireo della santa e gloriosa Vergine Maria, Nostra Signora. XXVIII Titolo Contemplazione*, in *Antologia della Marianità del Carmelo*, p. 170.

appealing sign of salvation for the people of God.⁴³ Practically, to wear the scapular is an external affirmation of an interior disposition to lead a Marian virtuous life in the living of the baptismal commitment of being clothed in Christ.⁴⁴ Moreover, the Carmelite scapular (habit) becomes also the sacramental sign of “the continuous protection of the Blessed Virgin, not only along the pathways of this life, but also at the moment of passing into the fullness of eternal glory”.⁴⁵

If we live a pure and holy life using every means to become an image of so holy a patron, imitating her perfections, we will be graced by her assistance at the hour of our death, and she will carry us in her gentle motherly arms to the gate of Heaven where we would be ultimately clothed for ever in the armour of God with immortality to “put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (*Col 3, 10*).⁴⁶ After faithfully persevering in

⁴³ We are referring here, namely to the fifteenth century *bullā sabatina* with the legendary promise of the Blessed Virgin Mary to personally draw out of purgatory, on the Saturday after their death, those who die wearing the scapular and who lived chastly according to one's state of life. This *sabbatine privilege* was supposedly revealed to Pope John XXII (...1327) who nonetheless negated the existence of purgatory. The scapular myth influenced so much the iconographic representations of Our Lady of Mount Carmel that one can still find holy cards of Our Lady succouring the souls of purgatory as well as devotional and spiritual texts which still refer to this myth: Cf. A miscellany of devotional booklets and pamphlets in the Carmelite library of Centro Internazionale S. Alberto under the titles of *Miscellanea. Devozione del Carmine – Preghiere; Devozioni del Carmine; Confraternità del Carmine; Devozione del Carmine. Istruzioni*. A contemporary mystical text written by an anonymous refers explicitly to the “scapular of the Queen of Carmel”: *Rapporto dal purgatorio*, translated by Edmondo Coccia, with a preface by Mgr. Henri Brincard, Milano 1997, p. 31. Hereafter *Rapporto dal Purgatorio*. It is our opinion that there is an intrinsic connection between the scapular myth and the Carmelite understanding of the *via purgativa*. In Carmel, the brown habit is a sign of penance, conversion, purification. The white cloak then becomes the sign of purity. Perhaps, nowadays, the understanding of the scapular as a sign of purification could be better exploited. About the sabbatine privilege question cf. LUDOVICO SAGGI, *La “bolla sabatina”. Ambiente. Testo. Tempo*, Rome 1967. For further study on the scapular devotion consult: BARTHOLOMAEUS F.M. XIBERTA, O.CARM., *De visione sancti Simonis Stock*, Rome 1950; HENRICUS M. ESTEVE, O.CARM., *De valore spirituali devotionis s. Scapularis*, Rome 1953; EMANUELE BOAGA, *La Signora del luogo. Maria nella storia e nella vita del Carmelo*, Rome 2000, pp. 99-125; G. MOLINARI, *Antologia dello Scapolare*, Rome 2001; and MARIA ANASTASIA DI GERUSALEMME - MARIANERINA DE SIMONE, *La veste più bella. Lo Scapolare, dono di Maria al Carmelo e alla Chiesa*, Rome 2001.

⁴⁴ J. CHALMERS and C. MACCISE, *With Mary the Mother of Jesus*, pp. 27,34.

⁴⁵ POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to the Most Reverend Fathers Joseph Chalmers Prior General of the Order of the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel and Camilo Maccise Prepositus General of the Order of the Discalced Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel* (25 March 2001).

⁴⁶ MICHAEL OF ST. AUGUSTINE, *Mystical Insitutions*. As published in the *Carmelite Proper of the Liturgy of Hours* to be read for the Office of Readings on the feastday of

the living out of this spiritual tradition, “the contemplative journey of transformation will have brought the Carmelite to be configured to Christ in the paschal mystery, making him ready to go in hope into the embrace of the Father, to the goal of transformative union with God towards which he once set out”.⁴⁷

III. THE PURGATORY PARADIGM

Embracing Purgatory

All of the above provides the spiritual setting to understand de' Pazzi's experience and affirmations on the matter. Echoing Caterina da Genova (1447-1510), Maddalena de' Pazzi repeats that was it not for “a beam of light” granted to her by the Lord, she would never have understood the great pains of purgatory.⁴⁸ Even so, she still finds it difficult to express in words that which was revealed to her.⁴⁹ In the whole *corpus* of mystical texts, Maria Maddalena appears very solicitous for the salvation of all creatures, namely of sinners who seem to be lost.⁵⁰ Almost all the raptures recorded in *I Quaranta giorni* end up with the mystic's recommendation of all “the creatures” to the

Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Rome 1993, pp. 164-166; CHALMERS - MACCISE, *With Mary the Mother of Jesus*, p. 27.

⁴⁷ RIVC, p. 124.

⁴⁸ *La Probatione* II, p. 44.: “O, le son le gran pene (replicando più e più volte), mai le harei stimate se non havessi avuto un poco di lume!”. Caterina da Genova writes about the souls in purgatory: “D'altra parte, poi, portano una pena così estrema, che a parole non può essere narrate né se ne potrebbe comprendere una minima parte, se non fosse mostrata da Dio con una grazia speciale, che, per grazia, Egli mostrò alla mia anima”. Cf. CATERINA DA GENOVA, *Vita mirabile – Dialogo – Trattato sul purgatorio*, transcribed by Filippo Lovison with an introduction by Luigi Mezzadri (=Spiritualità nei secoli), Rome 2004, p. 249. Hereafter *Trattato sul purgatorio*

⁴⁹ *La Probatione* II, pp. 49,52.: “però che non so trovar vocaboli (diceva lei) da esplicare esse pene, ma ciò che dico mi par dire bugia [...]. Vedete ciò che io dico mi par bugia, che non saprei trovar vocaboli da esplicarle, sendo del'tutto incapace, se Dio non le dimostrassi sotto queste similitudini, e vi dico che vi rimango drento ammirata ogni volta che me ne ricordo”. Again, Caterina da Genova writes: “Tutte queste cose che si sono dette in virtù di quello che io ho provato nella mia mente (per quanto ne ho potuto comprendere in questa vita) sono di tale gravità che ogni visione, ogni parola, ogni sentimento, ogni immaginazione, ogni giustizia e ogni verità, mi sembrano bugie e cose da niente Sono ancora confuse per non saper trovare vocaboli più estremi”. Cf. *Trattato sul purgatorio*, pp. 253-254.

⁵⁰ *I Quaranta giorni*, edited by Ermanno del SS. Sacramento, in *Tutte le opere di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi dai manoscritti originali*, directed by Fulvio Nardoni, vol 1, Florence 1960, pp. 101, 108. Hereafter *I Quaranta giorni*.

Lord. Usually the saint could not bear to see humanity's ingratitude in response to God's benevolence.⁵¹ Always in this perspective, during several raptures, Maria Maddalena contemplates the reality of purgatory, hell and heaven.⁵² Actually, at 6 pm on 22nd December 1594, the Lord reveals to the mystic a moribund "condemned to eternal sufferings".⁵³ He was a man of poor conditions who "conducted an evil and hideous life, and amongst other things he neglected the (spiritual) treasures of the Church, despising indulgences and other gifts and graces which she concedes to her faithful".⁵⁴ The Lord grants de' Pazzi this vision to make her and the community aware that nobody is begging mercy for similar poor souls. Indeed, the Lord laments that "there is much more iniquity committed by the wicked than prayers and merits of the just".⁵⁵ The same could be said about the knowledge granted by the Lord to de' Pazzi about purgatory and its pains. After perceiving purgatory, the mystic exclaims:

Oh my God, how much we have to pray for those poor souls who are to come and delight in you, or else to separate themselves for ever from you! I would dare to say that proportion wise, these prayers are acceptable as much as the seven words you, Incarnate Word, said on the cross were pleasing to the Eternal Father.⁵⁶

We are told that during the first period of probation de' Pazzi, taken up "as it was previously narrated, by her regular interior and exterior suffering without any particular incidents",⁵⁷ entered in a melancholic and depressed state. Subsequently, the sudden death of her brother Alamanno in the early hours of the 14th June 1587

⁵¹ *I Quaranta giorni*, pp. 109, 115, 135.

⁵² *I Quaranta giorni*, pp. 113, 150.

⁵³ *La Probatione* II, p. 238.: "fugli mostro dal' Signore un'anima che in quel punto passava di questa vita e era condannata all'eterne pene".

⁵⁴ *La Probatione* II, p. 238.: "era un huomo di bassa conditione il'quale haveva tenuto cattiva e bruttissima vita, e in fra l'altre cose non haveva tenuto conto de' tesori della Chiesa, dispregiando le indulgentie e altri doni e gratie che essa ne concede a sua fedeli".

⁵⁵ *La Probatione* II, p. 238.: "Ma il' Signore si doleva seco [...] esser molte più l'iniquità delli impii che le prece e meriti de' giusti".

⁵⁶ *La Probatione* II, pp. 47-48: "O quanto Iddio mio, haremo a pregare per quelle povere anime che stanno per venire a goder te o vero seapararsi per sempre d ate! Ardirò di dire che, secondo la proportione che vi può essere, ti sieno in un certo modo tanto grate tal preghiere, quanto furno all'eterno Padre le sette parole che tu, Verbo incarnate, profferisti in croce".

⁵⁷ *La Probatione* I, p. 41. "Da questo dì sino alli 14 del'mese di giugno 1587 prossimo avvenire, stette questa benedetta Anima nel'solito suo patire interiore e esteriore come imparte si è narrato disopra, senza che gli occorressi cosa particolare".

intensifies Maria Maddalena's period of desolation which will go on till the 30th July 1589, when the Lord from then on mitigates the mystic's probation granting to her "the feeling of God's help and power" even though she will continue to suffer temptations interiorly.⁵⁸ A year later, on the 10th June 1590, Maria Maddalena is taken out from the lion's den practically concluding the probation period.⁵⁹

Worthy of note is the fact that the probation period stands between two visions of purgatory. The first one concerns Maria Maddalena's brother; the latter concerning the mystic's mother who passed away in the morning of the 24th August 1590 between eight and nine.⁶⁰ Alamanno's appearance in purgatory seems to mark the end of the desolation period endured by Maria Maddalena "without any particular incidents", inaugurating then a deeper period of desolation marked by external manifestations. Similarly, the liberation of Maddalena Maria di Messer Lorenzo Buondelmonti from purgatory indicates the liberation of the mystic from the "lion's den". This leads us to think that the image of purgatory is fundamental to the understanding of the accounts recorded in *La Probatione*. Moreover, besides the deaths of Maddalena's brother and mother, the text reports both the death and the eternal destiny of the following as revealed to Maria Maddalena:

20th October 1587 - The Duke of Florence Francesco I de' Medici⁶¹
17th February 1589 – Sister Carità Masini⁶²

⁵⁸ *La Probatione* I, p. 225.

⁵⁹ *La Probatione* I, pp. 235ff.

⁶⁰ *La Probatione* II, p. 12.

⁶¹ *La Probatione* I, p. 126. Francesco I de' Medici aged forty-seven, passes away at 4am. Francesco I, hated for his furious character and dissolute lifestyle, had married Giovanna D'Austria, but lived in an adulterous relationship with Bianca Capello, whom he married secretly on the 5th June 1578 only a month after Giovanna passed away in April 1578. Even his second wife Bianca Capello, passed away on the same day at 3pm. Whilst according to history both died of fever; popular legend has it that Bianca and Francesco I were poisoned by Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici, who ordered a medical investigation on the corpses which confirmed death by severe fever. Bianca Capello was soon buried, whilst the solemn funerals of Francesco I de' Medici were celebrated on the 15th December 1587. Perhaps this explains why Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi sees the soul of Francesco I in purgatory on the 14th December. Cf. *Bianca Capello*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 10, directed by Benvenuto Bertoni, Rome 1968, pp. 15-16; *Francesco I de' Medici*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 49, directed by Giuseppe di Leia, Rome 1997, pp. 797-804.

⁶² *La Probatione* I, p. 218; *Libro delle Vestizioni, professioni, morti, 1568-1627*. According to the *calculus fiorentinus*, it was still 1588. The year in Florence would begin on the 25th March. Hereafter, when necessary, the actual year will be indicated in parenthesis.

13th March 1589 – Sister Umiltà Strozzi⁶³

May 1589 – Sister Lisabella de Nobili⁶⁴

5th June 1589 – Sister Maria Letizia Lanfredini⁶⁵

15th September 1590 – Sister Alessandra Guiducci⁶⁶

5th July 1591 – Messer Agostino Campi, confessor of the monastery⁶⁷

22nd December 1594 – An unknown man condemned to hell⁶⁸

As already noted, visions and ponderings on the afterlife are not restricted to the text of *La Probatione*. The reader finds various references to afterlife in all the mystical texts of de' Pazzi. In the text of *I Colloqui*, the mystic sees the afterlife destiny of particular people mentioned by name. The fifteenth colloquy reports that on the 17th February 1584 (1585) Maria Maddalena understood in rapture that Madonna Camilla de' Bagnesi was suffering on her deathbed and will continue to suffer in purgatory because she failed to correct her son Niccolò.⁶⁹ Subsequently, on the 28th March, after the nuns on different days offered prayers and masses for the benefit of Camilla, the mystic sees de' Bagnesi in heaven wishing to present her son Niccolò to Jesus. Even the nuns pray for him, but Niccolò will always refuse the Lord's grace.⁷⁰

Again, on the 9th May 1585, during another rapture, the mystic after praying and offering the Blood of Jesus for the salvation of souls "saw certain souls coming out of purgatory and entering paradise in

⁶³ *La Probatione* I, p. 219; *Libro delle Vestizioni, professioni, morti, 1568-1627*.

⁶⁴ *La Probatione* I, p. 222; *Libro delle Vestizioni, professioni, morti, 1568-1627*.

⁶⁵ *La Probatione* I, p. 223; *Libro delle Vestizioni, professioni, morti, 1568-1627*.

⁶⁶ *La Probatione* II, p. 16; *Libro delle Vestizioni, professioni, morti, 1568-1627*.

⁶⁷ *La Probatione* II, p. 25. Maria Maddalena does not have a vision of him in purgatory but in the glory of heaven. Later on she will see in glory Ignatius of Loyola and Louis Gonzaga. Cf. *La Probatione* II, pp. 258-261.

⁶⁸ *La Probatione* II, p. 238.

⁶⁹ *Quintodecimo colloquio*, in *I Colloqui* I, p. 177.: "Di Madonna Camilla, intese che pativa tanto in questa sua ultima infirmità per amore del' suo figlio, che quando era piccino lo poteva più correggere che non fece per rispetto di non lo contristare, e che non haveva in se il' maggior difetto di questo, però che ne patirebbe ancora in purgatorio". From the information recorded in the following colloquies it seems that Camilla passed away on the 17th February 1585. Cf. *Sesto decimo colloquio*, in *I Colloqui* I, p. 179; *Decimo ottavo Colloquio*, in *I Colloqui*, p. 194; *Decimo nono colloquio*, in *I Colloqui* I, p. 207.

⁷⁰ *Vigesimo quinto colloquio*, in *I Colloqui* I, pp. 280, 284.: "Di poi dice che raccomandando Niccolò vedde che Jesu gli mandò del' suo Sangue, ma esso lo ributtava e non lo volse accettare. Et Jesu presto presto lo tirò a se, acciò che ricevendolo lui indegnamente non l'havessi poi maggiormente a castigare".

that very moment. Amongst others, she recognised one of her cousins, son of one of her mother's sisters, who lives in Poggio Morelli. He was a Knight of Malta. He has also a sister, religious in San Giovannino of the same Order of the Knights. Now five years have past since this young man died. His mother is still alive".⁷¹

Even during the first set of raptures recorded in *I Quaranta giorni*, to Maria Maddalena was revealed that: "The souls of purgatory are very much delighted in seeing that the (other) souls who received the aforementioned liquor (from Jesus' breast) and grace, did not place any obstacle to receive this grace, as they used to do while still living in this world. That's why they are in purgatory now. Their delight is so great that it seems to diminish their sufferings".⁷² In another rapture she contemplates even the destiny of particular damned souls:

But, oh, Beloved how many are those who descend in this murky rift and abyss. You see, Love, as water showers down here from heaven, so these, Love. Ah, Love, that's what I am saying! Much more than that, very much more, I see them surging, more violently than water, and hear them dashing in that infernal shaft and abyss. And that, that one, oh, Love, and that one I say, that foul and malicious woman who persecutes you so much, I see her falling and dashing, in the most horrible, murky and unfathomable existing place. Oh, Love, Love.⁷³

⁷¹ *Colloquio quadragesimo sesto*, in *I Colloqui I*, p. 229.: "Per le sopradette cose s'intese che la vidde alcune anime uscire di purgatorio, e in quell'ora andare in paradiso. Et fra le altre vi conobbe un suo cugino, figliuolo d' una sorella di suo madre, allogata a Poggio Morelli, che era Cavaliere di Malta. E ha una sorella in San Giovannino, dico Religiosa del' detto habito de' Cavalieri, che sono intorno a cinque anni che esso giovane morì. Et la madre sua ancora vive. Vedete come si scontra bene con quello che essa disse e mostrò veder in esso ratto, et come el Signore esaudi il' suo prego, et gli fa grata quell'offerta che fece del' Sangue di Jesu per esse Anime del' purgatorio".

⁷² *I Quaranta giorni*, p. 113.: "Similmente vedevo le anime del Purgatorio haverne grandissimo contento per vedere che quell'anime che ricevevano tal Licore e gratia, non ponevano quello ostacolo che loro havevano posto mentre che vivevano in questo mondo, per il che loro sono in Purgatorio, e tanto era il contento loro, che quasi gli alleggeriva le pene".

⁷³ *I Quaranta giorni*, p. 150.: "Ma, o, amore quanti son quelli che scendono in questo pelago e abisso tanto tenebroso. Che vedi, Amore, così come l'acqua piove dal cielo quaggiù a noi, così essi, Amore. Hee, Amore, quello che io dico! E più assai, assai, e molto maggiormente, gli vedo io piovere, che no' fa l'acqua, e sento sprofondare laggiù in quel baratro e abisso infernale. Et quella, e quella, o, Amore, e quella dico, sì pestifera e maligna donna che tanto ti perseguita, come proprio fa una saetta la veggio cadere e sprofondare, nel più orribile, tenebroso e profondo luogo che vi sia. O, Amore, Amore". An allusion to Queen Elisabeth I of England (1533-1603) explicitly referred to as "heretic". Regarded by many as the greatest monarch of England, Elisabeth reigned after the Catholic Queen Mary. Although she returned the Church of England to power, at first she was tolerant towards Catholics since she believed that "There is only one

From the above, it could be said that according to Maria Maddalena only sinners who stubbornly refuse the grace of God and the help offered by the Church, understood as the community of believers, will be condemned to eternal suffering. Solitude for the departed through prayers and good works of Christians help the deceased brethren to receive God's work of purification. Accordingly, even the holy souls of purgatory, through their prayers, help us to receive divine grace in our earthly existence. This spiritual reality, rooted in the belief of the communion of saints, could be expressed in contemporary jargon by stating that:

If you are a member of the Body of Christ, when you forgive someone, he or she is forgiven; if you hold someone in love, he or she is held to the body of Christ. Hell is possible only when one has put oneself totally out of the range of love and forgiveness, human love and forgiveness, when one has rendered oneself incapable of being loved and forgiven in that he or she has actively rejected not so much explicit religious and moral teaching and practice as the love of sincere humanity [...]. Your touch is Christ's touch. When you love someone, unless that someone actively rejects your love and forgiveness, she or he is sustained in salvation. And this is true even beyond death. If someone close to you dies in a state which, externally at least, has her or him at odds ecclesially and morally with the visible church, your love and forgiveness will continue to bind that person to the Body of Christ and continue to forgive that individual, even after death.⁷⁴

Christ Jesus and one faith; the rest is a dispute about trifles". The following attempts to restore Catholicism in England which threatened Elisabeth's life and reign led the monarch to become more brutal in suppressing Catholics: In 1570 Pope Pius V issued the bull *Regnans in Excelsis*, excommunicating the queen and absolving Catholic subjects from allegiance to her and her laws; Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland, participated in a plot to assassinate the Elisabeth I; Elizabeth's brother-in-law and King of Spain, Philip II, tried in vain to invade England in 1588 with the "Invincible Armada" of 130 ships. Catholics and their priests were perceived as traitors and persecuted on the grounds of treason. From 1577 onwards, Elisabeth implemented the 1559 laws penalizing with a fine of 100 marks those Catholics who attended mass whilst condemning to death those priests who celebrated mass and those who arranged for it to be celebrated. [cf.: *La Chiesa nell'età dell'assolutismo confessionale 1563-1648* (=Storia della Chiesa – XVIII/2), edited by Luigi Mezzadri, Milano 1988, 24, 32, 40-41, 142]. The mystic's harsh denunciation against Elisabeth I is understandable since it occurs in 1584 when the monarch was still alive and precisely in the peak of persecution. Undeniably Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi was well informed from her Jesuit confessors about the pitiful situation in England. Perhaps, the mystic's expression "that foul and malicious woman who persecutes you so much" is an explicit reference to persecuted priests whom she generally calls "christi".

⁷⁴ RONALD ROLHEISER, *The Holy Longing. The Search for a Christian Spirituality*, New York 1999, p. 89.

“Poor fellow, what do you want from me?”.⁷⁵

Longing for the land of the living

On the day of her brother’s death Maria Maddalena retires in choir, to pray for the repose of his soul. During prayer she is rapt in spirit whilst perceiving her brother suffering purgatory “in great pains”.⁷⁶ The mystic’s first reaction is one of compassion, fear and sorrow for her brother’s “atrocious pains”.⁷⁷ The second reaction to her brother’s pain is to recognize the nature of the glorious but painful sufferings which define the soul’s state as blessed. In fact, as if trying to console her brother, de’ Pazzi calls him blessed whilst disclosing that his soul is simultaneously glorious and painful similar to the purgatorial pains.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ *La Probatione* I, p. 42.: “Poverino, che vorresti da me?”

⁷⁶ *La Probatione* I, p. 42.: “fu rapita in spirito e fugli mostro l’anima del’detto suo fratello, quale essa vedeva in purgatorio in gran pene”.

⁷⁷ *La Probatione* I, p. 42.: “Onde per compassione e insieme spavento di quelle atroce pene, spesso sospirava e metteva grande urla con pianto e gemito”.

⁷⁸ *La Probatione* I, p. 42.: “O Poverino! Ma beato te. O gloriosa e penosa anima che è la tua!”. One could not fail to be reminded here of Virgil’s consoling words addressed to the souls crowded unto the hard masses in Dante’s *Purgatorio*: “O ben finite, o già spiriti eletti [...] per quella pace ch’i’ credo che per voi tutti s’aspetti...” (Canto III, 73-75). One way of consoling suffering souls in purgatory is by reminding them of the glorious destination which awaits them. Cf. DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Divina Commedia. Inferno-Purgatorio-Paradiso*, with an introduction by Italo Borzi and a critical commentary by Giovanni Fallani – Silvio Zennaro, Rome 1999, p. 248. Hereafter *Purgatorio*. On the probability of a possible influence of Dante’s Purgatory on Maddalena’s thought and imagination, Claudio Catena states that Dante’s conception of the “secondo regno [...] “benché patrimonio comune della cultura italiana, non ha lasciato traccia alcuna negli scritti di S. Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi” cf. *Nota*, in *I Colloqui* II, p. 424. However, A. Maggi writes: “It is not my intention to assess whether the Florentine visionary had any direct knowledge of Dante’s *Purgatorio*. It is difficult to imagine that as a member of the noble Florentine family de’ Pazzi, Maria Maddalena was ignorant of the *Divine Comedy*. Still, according to her numerous biographies she had no familiarity with any lay book.” Cf. ARMANDO MAGGI, *Satan’s Rhetoric. A Study of Renaissance Demonology*, Chicago 2001, 163. Moreover, on Dante’s *Divina Commedia* E. Coccia points out that: “Da sempre la *Divina Commedia* è stata vista, considerata, utilizzata nella coscienza cristiana come un «quinto» Vangelo, ricco di sollecitazioni operative per un progetto di vita finalizzato verso Dio [...]. Non a caso, forse, già nel Trecento, Giovanni Boccaccio, il primo grande commentatore di Dante, propose la pubblica lettura del poema nella chiesa fiorentina di Santo Stefano di Badia, inaugurando così la consuetudine di quella «lectio Dantis» («lettura di Dante») che continua ad avere ancora oggi la suggestiva fisionomia di un atto liturgico”; cf. EDMONDO COCCIA, *Al di là della cronaca. Dentro la notizia* (=Saggi), edited by Aldo Onorati, Rome 2003, pp. 207-208. In a nineteenth century biography of Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi, the author now and then inserts sections from the *Divina Commedia*; cf. PLACIDO FABRINI, *La vita di S. Maria Maddalena*

Subsequently, the day after, namely, on 15th June 1585, still in a sorrowful mood, Maria Maddalena pauses in reflection on the nature of the purgatorial pains. Around the 18th hour (12.00 pm) whilst working with the nuns in the common room, she kept crying because of the knowledge she had of the pains of purgatory. Suddenly, she enters rapture to perceive again the pains of purgatory, but she was so impressed by the vision that “she began to tremble and to sigh so intensely, that she seemed to be consumed”.⁷⁹ However, the Lord pitied her and showed her the “glory which comes after the pains”⁸⁰ of purgatory. Thus, Maria Maddalena is led to say: “I do not want to continue referring to these pains as atrocious, but glorious, since they lead to so much glory”.⁸¹ The future glory makes that the atrocious pains become bearable to the souls, thus they are glorious: “Oh, these are great (pains), but nonetheless they are bearable”.⁸² After considering the state of her brother’s soul, Maria Maddalena directs a loving reproach to her brother who cries for mercy:

No, do not come near me. – When you were down here, you did not want to give heed to what I said, and now you want that I give heed to you? – Poor fellow, what do you want from me?⁸³

This dialogue reveals a paradoxical closeness in separation between Alamanno and Maddalena. The mystic is close to her brother through prayer and familial affection, but physically separated. Perhaps this closeness and separation reflects their relationship before Alamanno’s death. Here on earth Maria Maddalena was separated from her brother not so much by the monastic enclosure, as by the

*de' Pazzi, nobile fiorentina, sacra vergine carmelitana... con l'aggiunta delle di lei opere e con la narrazione de' prodigi operati pel di lei intercedimento fino ai nostri giorni, 2 vols., Florence 1852. For quotations from Dante's *Divina Commedia* take as example pages 121, 178-179, 301 of vol. 1.*

⁷⁹ *La Probatione* I, p. 46.: “fremea in se stessa e metteva sospiri molto grandi, e pareva che si consumassi.”

⁸⁰ *La Probatione* I, p. 46.: “Dio [...] gli mitigò tal vista mostrandogli ancora la gloria che seguita doppo la pena.”

⁸¹ *La Probatione* I, p. 46.: “Non vo' già chiamar più esse pene atroce, ma sì bene gloriose poichè conducono a tanta gloria.”

⁸² *La Probatione* I, p. 42.: “O, le son grande, e pur si sopportano.”

⁸³ *La Probatione* I, p. 42.: “O poverino! Ma beato te. O gloriosa e penosa anima ch'è la tua! – O, le son grande e pur si sopportano. – E io credevo che tu n'avessi più. – O chi le penetrassi – Deh, non mi ti accostare. – Quando eri quaggiù non volevi udir me, e hora vuoi che io oda te? – Poverino che vorresti da me?”

fact that he was led astray from the Lord's way. In a letter addressed to her father, for Easter, the mystic appears to be worried about her brother's lifestyle. Maddalena writes:

I plead you to exhort Alamanno, most cherished brother, to go to holy confession and communion, as it is convenient for a good Christian, so that, as you generated him according to the flesh, you will generate him again in the Lord according to the spirit. And I myself, through my greatest possible affection, will pray for this intention.⁸⁴

Failing to "generate him in the Lord according to the spirit" while still on earth, Maria Maddalena assures her brother that his parents will succour him in his journey towards the fullness of life in the Spirit. The account of the fraternal dialogue between the mystic and her brother reveals that Alamanno approached his sister for help. A month after, precisely on Sunday 12th July 1587 it is the mystic who will desperately cry for help as she journeys in the *lions' den*, her purgatory on earth. The nuns report that during the whole day the saint was tested by God "not only through the interior temptation but also externally in her body".⁸⁵ Alamanno requires from his sister to urge their parents to offer suffrages for his sake. Maria Maddalena promises him that even she will offer intercessory prayers for him. Similarly, in her probation, the saint will cry to the nuns for help saying: "I am dying! I am drowning! Help me! Don't you believe me?".⁸⁶

Even with Maria Maddalena there is an abyss separating her from the rest of her community, similar to that which separates her brother's soul from the land of the living. The nuns do their utmost

⁸⁴ Lettera 6. Al Molto honorando et charissimo padre Ms. Camillo de' Pazzi in casa: 23 marzo 1597 (1596), in *La Renovazione della Chiesa*, edited by Fausto Vallainc – Claudio Catena, in *Tutte le opere di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi*, vol. 4, directed by Fulvio Nardoni, Florence 1966, pp. 150-151.: "vi prego che esortiate Alamanno, fratel charissimo, alla santa confessione e comunione, come si conviene a fedel christiano, acciò che, sì come gli siate genitore in quanto alla carne, lo generiate ancora al Signore in quanto allo spirito; e io ancora, col maggiore affetto che posso, di ciò lo prego". The letter should be dated ten years earlier, since Alamanno passed away on the 14th June 1587.

⁸⁵ *La Probatione* I, p. 72.: "Iddio la volse provare non solo con la tentatione interiore ma ancora esteriormente nel corpo suo". The nuns interpret these psychosomatic manifestations as devilish attacks permitted by God. The text bears reminiscences of Job's story. Even he was tempted by God and had his body filled sore boils (*Jb* 2, 7).

⁸⁶ *La Probatione* I, p. 72.: "I dico chi muoio! I'affogo! Aiutatemi voi! Non me lo credete?".

to help Maria Maddalena, as she did her best to help her brother. The mystic recites prayers and psalms from the liturgy of the dead for the consolation of her brother's soul. Similarly, for Maddalena's sake, the nuns recite prayers, psalms and hymns to console her, besides blessing her with relics and holy water to purify her.⁸⁷ De Pazzi's state during the period of her probation resembles that of her brother, and all the other souls, in purgatory. Subsisting in the sphere of death and separated for ever from the land of the living these souls are suspended in a transient state longing to arrive at the fullness of the beatific vision. Also Maria Maddalena, although physically present to others in space and time, she nonetheless finds herself psychologically and spiritually disconnected from the environment surrounding her. In the probation, she finds herself also deprived from the sensible perception of the life of grace, an experience which will come to an end sooner or later. During these five years de' Pazzi will have to put up with the desolation and "darkness" of the world "down here" hoping and longing to see God "*facie ad faciem*" up there in heaven.⁸⁸ In the *Twenty fifth Colloquy*, the ecstatic says to Jesus that when she is up there she understands him, as she understands people on earth.⁸⁹ Although this is a constant in de' Pazzi's experience, the probation

⁸⁷ *La Probatione* I, p. 72.: "E noi gli rispondevamo confortandola che non haveva paura, ma che si confidassi che il Demonio non haveva potestà se non tanta quanta gli concedeva Jesu, e aspergevamo l'acqua benedetta, dicendo Salmi e Hinni, e segnandola con le reliquie. E per ogni volta che noi la segnavamo e rinforzavamo l'oratione, si vedeva che cresceva il suo patire. Et per il veemente patire interiore, gli uscì fuori per tutto il corpo certe cocciuole molto grosse".

⁸⁸ *Secondo colloquio*, in *I Colloqui* I, pp. 72, 81. Generally the mystic defines this world as "quaggiù" and heaven as "lassù". Sometimes during rapture, being spiritually suspended between heaven and earth, she would refer to the world as "laggiù" and heaven "quassù". Cf. *Vigesimo quinto Colloquio*, in *I Colloqui*, pp.270, 272; *Vita della Beata Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, vergine nobile fiorentina, monaca nel ministero di S. Maria degli Angioli in Borgo S. Fridiano, oggi in Cestello di Firenze, dell'ordine carmelitano osservante, raccolta e descritta dal Signor. D. Vincenzo Puccini, confessore e governatore di detto ministero. Ridotta in miglior ordine, con aggiunta di molte azioni virtuose e miracoli cavate da' processi formati per la sua canonizzazione*, Florence 1639, p. 137.: "Ancora mentre si ritrovava in estasi, quasi sempre le pareva esser lontanissima da terra; e quasi che si trovassi in Cielo con Dio, e con i Santi, non vedeva cosa alcuna; ne se alcuna le voleva parlare, acciocchè ella sentisse, bisognava dire molto forte, e con voce gagliarda, e anco talora non sentiva; e così ella se rispondeva ad alcuna, che l'interrogasse, o se per divino volere parlava in estasi ad alcuna, lo diceva con voce alta, come avesse avuto a parlare a persona lontanissima: e talora pensando di non esser sentita, rivolta al Signore diceva: *Signore non mi sentono, sono troppo lontani laggiù....*"

⁸⁹ *Vigesimo quinto colloquio*, in *I Colloqui*, "Così come hora intendo più te che loro; così laggiù intendo più loro che te".

period heightens the dramatic condition of those who long for God's vision. Maria Pacifica del' Tovaglia, the transcriber of these spiritual experiences describes the saint's condition as an "exile".⁹⁰

On the day of her brother's death, in the evening, Maria Maddalena reveals to Mother Superior her brother's demands. Besides, receiving communion a hundred and seven times, the mystic was to fast for forty days.⁹¹ Then, she was to request from their father to receive communion for twelve times, their mother for thirty times and his elderly brother for seven times. All this was to supply for Alamanno's failure to receive communion while here on earth.⁹² For Alamanno's disobedience towards his parents twenty votive masses of Jesus' Passion had to be offered.⁹³ Then another ten votive masses of

⁹⁰ *Probatione* I, p. 156.

⁹¹ *La Probatione* I, p. 45. The expression "forty days" as well as "forty years" is a Biblical figure of speech synonymous with the notions of temptation, trial, penance, conversion and purification. (*Gen* 7,4-8,6; *Exod* 16,35; *Num* 14, 33-34; *Dt* 9, 25; *1Kgs* 19,8; *Lk* 4, 2). In the liturgical cycle of the Church, the period of Lent goes on for forty days.

⁹² Maria Maddalena considered failure to receive holy communion as an imperfection. She joined the Carmelites because in *Santa Maria degli Angeli* monastery she had the possibility to communicate everyday (cf. *Breve ragguaglio*, in *I Quaranta giorni* edited by Ermanno del SS. Sacramento, in *Tutte le opera di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi dai manoscritti originali*, directed by Fulvio Nardoni, vol 1, Florence 1960, p. 85). In the *Sentenze e detti*, the mystic is reported to have said: "If not obliged through obedience, I would prefer to die instead of failing, even for once, to receive communion" (cf. *Sentenze e detti generali tratti dalla sua Vita e da suoi scritti, utili a tutti, ma particolarmente alle persone religiose*, in CLAUDIO CATENA, *S. Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, carmelitana. Orientamenti spirituali e ambiente in cui visse*, Rome 1966, p. 134. On various occasions the saint would warn the nuns against failing to receive communion (cf. *Ammaestramenti, avvisi e ricordi*, in *Renovazione della Chiesa*, edited by Claudio M. Catena, in *Tutte le opere di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi dai manoscritti originali*, directed by Fulvio Nardoni. Vol. 7. Florence 1966, p. 241. Hereafter *Ammaestramenti*.). *The Probation* reports that on the 23rd May 1589, Maria Maddalena while in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament entered rapture and saw the soul of a nun suffering in purgatory because during her life had spent a lot of time in "looking at the Blessed Sacrament and honouring it", but generally failed to receive communion, even though the nuns had the "commodity" to receive communion frequently (cf. *La Probatione* I, p. 222). In reply to her brother's request to communicate for his sake, Maddalena states that she can do that every morning (*La Probatione*, p. 43).

⁹³ Maria Pacifica del Tovaglia reports that the mystic's mother in comparing Maria Maddalena with her brothers declared that: "questa figlia né piccola, né grande mi ha dato mai un minimo dispiacere e disgusto ma sempre contento e allegrezza" (cf. *Breve Ragguaglio*, p. 69). Therefore it is of no surprise that Maria Maddalena mentions this particular sin in her brother's life, since she highly esteemed the virtue of obedience, as appears from the mystical texts. For the mystic, in the spiritual journey, obedience is above all surrendering to God's love. To grasp the mystic's understanding of this virtue see: *Ammaestramenti*, pp. 225-230

the Holy Spirit had to be offered for the consciously committed sins. Alamanno asks also of his parents to forgive those who led him astray from the Lord's way through bad example.⁹⁴ These suffrages are meant to help Alamanno in enduring the painful but glorious purification. Although on his deathbed the simple hearted and charitable Alamanno conformed himself to God's will, and so he was saved, he nonetheless needed to be purified from the effects of his slackness and sins.⁹⁵ Interceding for her brother through prayer, Maria Maddalena specifies that only God, just and awesome in his mercy and purity, will at last free her brother from his sufferings.

*"She left her place and went around the whole garden"*⁹⁶
Journeying into the land of the dead

On the third day from the death of her brother, in the evening of 16th June 1587, Maria Maddalena was "in the garden with many other nuns battering the laundry, after a while, she fled rapidly away from them".⁹⁷ Surprised by the sudden reaction of the young Carmelite, the nuns figure out that she entered rapture. This will last for three hours and a half from the 24th hour (6.00pm).⁹⁸ During this rapture the mystic first comes to know again about the condition of her brother's soul in purgatory, then she is invited by the Lord to journey into purgatory because "Jesus wanted to show her all the pains suffered by the blessed souls".⁹⁹

⁹⁴ *La Probatione* I, pp. 42, 45.

⁹⁵ *La Probatione* I, pp. 43, 45. Perhaps here is a direct influence from Augustine's *Enchiridion*. In chapters 69-73 Augustine specifies that God in his mercy will save those who perform works of mercy, especially in being ready to forgive others' misgivings. Moreover, these must have the disposition to amend their lives (cf. S. AURELII AUGUSTINI HIPONENSIS EPISCOPI, *Enchiridion ad Laurentium sive de Fide, Spe et Charitate liber unus*, in *PL* 40, 265-266). Maddalena de' Pazzi specifies that her brother performed works of mercy, conformed to the will of God on his deathbed and asked from his parents to forgive those who led him astray.

⁹⁶ *La Probatione* I, p. 48.: "Però si partì del'luogo dove era [...] e circui tutto l'orto".

⁹⁷ *La Probatione* I, p. 46.: "Martedì, addì 16 di detto mese di giugno 1587, sendo questa benedetta Anima la sera al'tardi nell'orto con di molte altre monache che scamatava, stata che vi fu alquanto, si partì con gran velocità da esse". Usually mattresses or carpets are cleared of dust by beating them with the "scamato" in the open air.

⁹⁸ *La Probatione* I, pp. 46, 58, 55, 57. However, in this rapture, the journey in purgatory would last only for two hours, since she began to go round the garden or orchard at the first hour (7.00pm) of the day, which would correspond to sunset. Venturing through Purgatory, Dante, at dusk finds himself in a valley full of flowers and plants, where he finds rest, before continuing his journey. Cf *Purgatorio*, Canto VII, 42-81.

⁹⁹ *La Probatione* I, p. 48.: "Diceva del'purgatorio, che Jesu gli voleva mostrare tutte le pene che patiscono quelle benedette anime."

In the first part of the rapture de' Pazzi understands that her brother was relieved by the prayers and suffrages offered for him. On the occasion of Alamanno's death, in the morning, the community celebrated the Office of the Dead for the repose of his soul and "that great sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus" was being offered by others.¹⁰⁰ All suffrages for the dead are in fact grounded in the mystery of the sacrifice of Christ crucified and risen, of whom the Eucharist is memorial. Biblical revelation clarifies that the souls of the just enjoy the beatific vision because they are washed and sanctified from their sins in Jesus' own blood offered once and for all on the cross (*Rom* 6,10; *Rev* 1, 5; 7, 14; *Hbr* 13, 12). By offering the Eucharist for the repose of her brother, Maria Maddalena cleanses her brother into Jesus' blood. She expresses this through dramatic gestures:

She understood that those blessed souls are freed through this Blood which takes them out from that place (purgatory) to bring them in the glory of paradise. That's why she offered that Blood for this soul (of her brother). She saw also that, for that moment, through this offering Jesus passed on to her this soul (of her brother). Thus, through external signs and gestures showed that she was holding in her hands the soul of her brother to present it and to affectionately recommend it to Jesus and to the Blessed Virgin.¹⁰¹

In de' Pazzi's writings, the blood of Christ is a powerful image rich in symbolism and meaning. In this vision, the souls in purgatory are cleansed through the effusion of the Sacred Blood of Jesus. Moreover, here on earth, the same Blood purifies and renews the Church and its members: "For this (renewal) there is no other remedy my God, except your charity and your Blood.... Great is your

¹⁰⁰ *La Probatione* I, p. 48.: "vedeva l'anima del'suo fratello alla quale era abbreviato il tempo che doveva stare in purgatorio per l'Uffitio che si era fatto la mattina per lui, nel'quale si era offerto tante volte quell gran sacrificio del' Corpo e Sangue di Iesu". Perhaps, on the 16th June the funeral of Alamanno was celebrated. This would explain why the Office for the Repose of his soul was celebrated on the 16th June, two days after his death.

¹⁰¹ *La Probatione* I, p. 47.: "intendeva come quelle benedette anime son libere mediante esso Sangue, assumendole esso di quel luogo e tirandole alla gloria del paradiso. Per il'che lei offriva esso Sangue per detta anima e vedeva che mediante essa offerta Jesu gli concedeva in sua liberta per quello spatio di tempo essa anima. Onde essa esteriormente con atti e gesti delle mane mostrò di haverla, e mostravala a Jesu e alla Vergine S.ma raccomandandola loro caldissimamente." She repeats these gestures at the end of the vision on Purgatory. Cf. *La Probatione* I, p. 56.

work...".¹⁰² Again, Maria Maddalena clarifies that through this offering, the soul of her brother was not at all freed from his sufferings but only found "a bit of relief" (*refrigerio*) in bearing them.¹⁰³ To explain the concept of *refrigerium*, she adopts the image of "one who is in the midst fire and (of) somebody who raises him up, however without taking him out from that fire. He would feel the heat without burning".¹⁰⁴

Refrigerio is reminiscent of the Latin *refrigerium*, referring to the early Christian custom of celebrating, at first, the funerary banquet and subsequently, the Eucharist on the third day from the death of a beloved in remembrance of the Lord's resurrection on the third day. Others followed on the seventh and on the thirtieth day, parallel with Joseph's seven day mourning for his deceased father, Jacob (*Gen* 50, 10) and the thirty day mourning of Israel for the deceased leaders Moses and Aaron (*Nm* 20,30; *Dt* 34,8).¹⁰⁵ Both banquet and the Eucharist bear an eschatological significance representing the heavenly banquet to which all the elect participate, finding their rest (*refrigerium*) in God. In antiquity, during banquets, guests reclined at ease resting on couches. In the Gospel, Luke refers to this custom when speaking of Lazarus' rest in "Abraham's bosom" (*Lk* 16, 22-23). Subsequently, from this parable, Tertullian will develop the idea of the *refrigerium interim*, namely Abraham's bosom which will provide an intermediary rest for the just before the final judgement. Although different from the concept of Purgatory Tertullian's *refrigerium interim* inspired the idea of intercession for the departed so that they may be granted rest (*refrigerium*) by God.¹⁰⁶ Subsequently, the idea of offering

¹⁰² *La Renovazione della Chiesa*, p. 47.: "E a questo non c'è rimedio se non la tua charità, Dio mio, e il tuo Sangue.... Grande è l'opera tua". All the letters are filled with references to the purifying and life giving blood of the "innamorato, svenato e inchiovellato Agnello"; cf. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁰³ *La Probatione* I, p. 47.: "Et domandandogli noi fuor del' ratto se in quell tempo che teneva quell'anima essa pativa, ci rispose che non era in tutto libera dale pene, ma haveva qualche poco di refrigerio".

¹⁰⁴ *La Probatione* I, p. 47.: "come sarebbe se vedessi uno nel fuoco e che lo sollevassi da quell fuoco, am che però non lo cavassi: esso sentirebbe il caldo ma non abrucerebbe."

¹⁰⁵ SILVANO SIRBONI, *Il culto cristiano verso i defunti*, in *Vita Pastorale* 11 (1998), pp. 23-34; GIUSEPPE DE NINNO, *Defunti*, in *Enciclopedia cattolica* IV, Vatican City 1950, 1313-1330; ENRICO JOSI, *Refrigerio*, in *Enciclopedia cattolica* X, Vatican City 1953, 627-631.

¹⁰⁶ LE GOFF, *La nascita del purgatorio*, pp. 57-62. Tertullian did not contemplate an intermediary state of purification. The *refrigerium interim* is only the place where the just wait for the final judgement. However he did accept the custom of offering prayers for the dead.

suffrages for the *refrigerium* of the departed souls will survive the various developments in the understanding of Purgatory. In this context, Maria Maddalena perceives that her brother's soul found *refrigerio* from the purging flames thanks to prayers and suffrages offered for his rest.

Till now, one can say that purgatory approached de' Pazzi because the Lord granted her to perceive the state of her brother's soul together with others who are enduring purification. However, there comes a point in the vision where, Maria Maddalena is invited to immerse herself in this state of purification which is also transformed in her imagination as a place to visit. The monastery's orchard or garden provides the topography which enables the mystic to embark on an imaginary mystical journey in Purgatory. Perhaps, the act of "battering the laundry"¹⁰⁷ triggered in the Maria Maddalena the inspiration to visit the land of the dead where the souls are beaten, threshed or lapidated to be cleansed from the residues of their sins and vices.¹⁰⁸

Maria Maddalena is afraid to go around Purgatory alone so she asks to be accompanied by her Guardian Angel.¹⁰⁹ The more she penetrates the mystery of purification, the more she asks for heavenly help. Gradually, she asks to be accompanied in purgatory by her dearly loved saints: Catherine of Siena, Angelus of Sicily and Augustine of Hippo:

Walking a little bit longer, she began to pray Jesus so that he may send her another help apart from that which he granted her, namely, her guardian Angel. The sufferings were so great and the sight of the devils so horrible, that she was terrified. We understood that (Jesus) gave her, Saint Catherine of Siena, for whom she has great devotion as to call her, her little sister. Upon seeing her she said: "Oh, Catherine come, come to help me invoke mercy for these poor little souls and to offer for them the Blood of yours and mine Spouse" [...]. Here she began to ask again

¹⁰⁷ *La Probatione* I, p. 46. See footnote 97.

¹⁰⁸ *La Probatione* I, p. 52. The saint uses these terms to express in words some of the punishments: "lapidati, attriti e trebbiati". In some way or another, these verbs involve the act of battering.

¹⁰⁹ *La Probatione* I, p. 48.: "Io non me ne curo; ma poichè tu vuoi, lo circurò tutto. Ma chi verrà meco? L'Angel mio custode, è?" The figure of the Guardian Angel who accompanies people is a constant in various accounts of journeys in the other world. Cf. Various accounts of similar journeys in LE GOFF, *La nascita del purgatorio*, pp. 121ff; DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Purgatorio* Canto VIII, 19-39, 97-108; Canto IX, 76-132; Canto XXVII, 1-12. In *Rapporto dal Purgatorio*, the presence of the Guardian Angel is constant.

for help, and we understood that Jesus gave her Saint Angelus martyr of our Carmelite Order, to whom she is also particularly devoted, and we understood that taking her by hands, both placed her in between Saint Catherine and the abovementioned Saint. Thus she went on thoroughly surprised that those blessed souls were content and happy in the midst of so cruel and harsh sufferings [...]. She began again to cry for help, and invoking Saint Augustine, the father, whom she is so much devoted. We learned that even he came to her assistance.¹¹⁰

In the text of *La Probatione*, these saints appear frequently to accompany, assist, encourage and purify the mystic in her desolation and affliction.¹¹¹ Together with these saints, others come in pairs to assist Maria Maddalena and rejoice with her, on the 10th June 1590, for having won the spiritual combat with the evil spirits. These saints are: Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Agnes, Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Mary Magdalen, Saint John the Baptist and Saint Catherine virgin and martyr, Saint Stephen and Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Saint Francis and Saint Clare of Assisi, Saint Augustine and Saint Angelus, Saint Michael and the Guardian Angel.¹¹²

In the company of her Guardian Angel Maria Maddalena, frightened, begins her journey in purgatory:

Entering in this journey, after two or three steps, she began to tremble greatly and to clasp her hands together, showing signs of great sorrow in her face covering it with her hands and appearing pallid, bending down and shrinking back, as one who is taken by great terror. In this first (part of her journey) she would move a bit further then turn back again, revealing signs of fear and anguish instilling consternation in

¹¹⁰ *La Probatione* I, pp. 49-50, 53.: “Quando fu ita un pezzo, cominciò a pregar Jesu che gli mandassi aiuto oltra al’ suo Angel custode che di già gli haveva dato, però che erono tanto grande le pene e orribile la vista de’ Demoni, che haveva grandissimo spavento. E intendemo che gli dette Santa Catherina da Siena sua grandissima devota (e la chiama la sua sorellina), onde lei vedendola diceva: ‘Catherina vieni, vieni, aiutami chiedere misericordia per queste povere animine e offerire il’ Sanguine del’ tuo e mio Sposo per loro’ [...]. Qui cominciò a chiedere di nuovo aiuto, e si intese che Jesu gli dette Santo Angelo [*da Trapani*] martire dell’Ordine nostro carmelitano, ancor lui suo particolare devoto, e ci avedemo che la messono in mezzo Santa Catherina e il’ detto Santo, pigliandola per la mano, faccendo lei l’atto con le mane come quando si piglia alcuno, e così andava meravigliandosi assai che quelle benedette anime stessino sì contente e allegre fra sì crudele e aspre pene [...]. Cominciò di nuovo a chiamare aiuto, e invocava il’ padre Santo Agostino, suo grandissimo devoto, e intendemo che ancor lui venne in sua compagnia.”

¹¹¹ *La Probatione* I, pp. 67, 73, 85, 89, 92, 109, 174, 180, 224, 232-239.

¹¹² *La Probatione* I, p. 238.

those who saw her. And as she told us later, she was drawing herself back in that way, because, initially, she even felt herself to be tormented whilst entering that place. Then, when she was out of rapture, on asking her if she really suffered from those pains, she answered that her suffering consisted only in the way one would suffer on seeing another one in great pains. He would suffer from compassion. "So I", she said, "suffered from seeing them in great pains, but I did not feel those pains, because I do not think a mortal creature would bear so much".¹¹³

The compassionate mystic suffers from seeing the souls' painful state in purgatory. In this first part of her journey, de' Pazzi is unable to distinguish the type of chastisement applied to purify the vices in the souls present in this part of Purgatory. She only recognizes, to say it "in human words, a great quantity of fire and ice".¹¹⁴ For these souls, Maria Maddalena cries: "Pity, pity, mercy. Oh Blood, come down and free these souls! Poor souls you suffer so much but still you are so happy".¹¹⁵ In this part of purgatory, Maria Maddalena understands that the souls "suffer greatly because they continuously see this horrific and frightful vision of Devils, and because sometimes, God permits that a particular soul, who merits greater chastisement, be tormented by them according to his will".¹¹⁶

¹¹³ *La Probatione I*, p. 48.: "E entrando in detto viaggio, ita che fu dua o tre passi, cominciò forte a tremare battendo le mane insieme, travagliandosi assai nel' volto, con far le carne palide e interriate e andando curva e rannicchiata, come quando uno ha una gran paura. E in questo principio andava un poco e poi si ritirava, facendo segni di spavento e timore che a vederla gettava grandissimo terrore. E come ci disse poi, si ritirava tanto perché gli pareva di avere a esser tormentata ancor lei entrando in quel luogo, massimo in questo principio. E domandandogli noi fuor del' ratto se in verità haveva patito nessuna di quelle pene, ci rispose che non haveva patito se non come farebbe uno che vedessi un altro patire grandemente, che vedendolo patirebbe in se stesso per la compassione. 'Così io, diceva lei, pativo per veder loro tanto patire, ma non era già chi sentissi esse pene, perché non credo che una creatura mortale fussi possibile che le sostenessi'."

¹¹⁴ *La Probatione I*, p. 49.: "Ma in questo principio dice che non discerneva per qua' vitii e' patissimo, né manco la particolarità delle pene tanto erano grande, ma si bene vedeva gran quantità di fuoco e diaccio, per dire nel' modo nostro."

¹¹⁵ *La Probatione I*, p. 49.: "Pietà, pietà, misericordia. O Sanguine, discendi e libera queste anime! Poverine vo' patite pur tanto e state sì contente". On the possibility to suffer and be happy simultaneously cf. *S.Th.*, III, q. 84, a. 9, ad 2; *Trattato sul purgatorio*, pp. 248-249.

¹¹⁶ *La Probatione I*, pp. 49-50.: "hanno bene grandissima pena per avere del' continuo essa orrenda e spaventosa vista de' Demoni, e ancora alcuna volta Iddio permette che qual'ch'una di esse per meritare maggior pena sia tormentata da essi tanto quanto è il' voler suo". Later on de' Pazzi would that the soul of a particular Carmelite nun did not suffer the horrible vision of the devils in Purgatory because she accustomed to praise continuously the Lord. Cf. *La Probatione I*, p. 218.

Maria Maddalena does not wish herself to be there, in that dark and gloomy place.¹¹⁷ She is surprised to find in this part of purgatory religious, so “she stopped and gasped greatly, and showing signs of great awe, with a high voice said: “Oh gracious God, even religious?”¹¹⁸ In the same dark and gloomy place she sees “the ignorant and those who have died in their youth”¹¹⁹ amongst whom she sees her brother’s soul. Although these souls suffer the vision of the devils, they find consolation and rest (*refrigerio*) in the vision of their Guardian Angels emanating clarity, splendour and light in that place of darkness.¹²⁰ However, her brother’s angel was far from his soul, because during his lifetime Alamanno did not obey his instructions. The mystic points out to Alamanno that another soul, obedient to her Guardian Angel during lifetime, is now benefiting from his consoling presence and gestures.¹²¹ The vision of the devils and angels in purgatory stands for the double spiritual suffering produced in the souls during purification. Firstly, these souls, abandoned in God’s justice and mercy are aware of their past sinfulness and still not totally free from the effects of sin and evil, suffer to expiate their misgivings. In a certain sense they still perceive the presence of evil, the devils. Secondly, these souls are saved and are in a state of purification, they long to see God and to be united with him in charity, and this is also a source of pain for them. The

¹¹⁷ *La Probatione* I, pp. 50-51.: “Ma beata a me che io non andassi più giù”. Subsequently Maria Maddalena would refer to this place as “tenebroso e oscurissimo”.

¹¹⁸ *La Probatione* I, 50.: “si fermò e messe un gran sospiro, e con segni e gesti di grande ammirazione, e alta voce disse: “O Dio buono, de’ religiosi, è?”

¹¹⁹ *La Probatione* I, p. 50.: “Ita che fu alquanto gli fu mostro gli ignoranti e quelli che sono morti piccoli”.

¹²⁰ *La Probatione* I, p. 51.: “Vedeva che cisacuna di quelle di quelle anime haveva il suo Angelo custode appresso di se, dalla cui presentia ricevono gran refrigerio e conforto, sì come per la vista de’ Demoni hanno gran pena. E è quell luogo, sì come ci ha riferito lei, tenebroso e oscurissimo, ma dalla chiarezza e splendore delli Angeli vi ridonda un certo chè di lume, dal quale esse anime sono molto consolate”.

¹²¹ *La Probatione* I, p. 51. Another soul is presented to Alamanno as an example of obedience: “Vedi quante carezze fa quell’Angelo alla sua anima? O, perchè le l’amò in questo mondo, e chi più l’ama e l’ubbidisce, più refrigerio riceverà da lui in questo luogo” (see also footnote 93). According to Dante one of the methods used in purgatory to purify souls is the contemplation of the virtue opposite to the vice one is being purified from. Cf. *Purgatorio*, Cantos X, 28-96; XIII, 28-36; XV, 85-117; XVIII, 97-102; XX, 19-33; XXII, 142-154; XXV, 127-132. In Dante’s *Purgatory* examples of virtues are episodes taken from the life of the Blessed Virgin and of other personages carved into the side of the mountain in each terrace. Dante provides also other personages as models of virtue. Furthermore in Canto VIII, 19-39, 97-108, angels radiant with light, representing virtues, descend in Purgatory to catch away the devil present in the form of a serpent.

more a soul is purified from the residue of sin and evil, the more it grows in charity and continues to suffer only out of pure love.¹²²

This insight on the vision of the devils in purgatory, sheds light also on the experience Maria Maddalena will pass during her period of probation. The text is full of accounts of the mystic being oppressed, beaten by the devils and terrified by their vision. When asked if she really does see the devil with her corporeal eyes, de' Pazzi answers that it is not so, "but that she always sees him present with the eyes of the mind, as (by similitude) when someone sees something with the corporeal eyes, which then remains so impressed in the mind that the person concerned feels he is always seeing it, even though he does not see it with his bodily eyes".¹²³ Simply put, this could be interpreted as saying that during the probation period de' Pazzi was constantly perceiving the presence of evil around her.

Maria Maddalena continues her imaginary and symbolical journey around the garden, plunging herself in the mystery of the purification endured by the suffering souls in Purgatory, all of which, besides enduring appropriate punishments for the sins committed, had to suffer in fire and ice for purification.¹²⁴ After contemplating the pains endured by religious, the ignorant and those who died young, she encounters the hypocrites who suffer in a "dreadful place" which is "full of frightening and repulsive devils, having as well "cruel and excruciating pains".¹²⁵ The punishment given to the hypocrites was that of being placed very near to hell and pierced with knives. Being

¹²² Strikingly, this reference to the perception of the devils in the state of purification is found in various accounts of mystical experiences on purgatory. On the supposed presence of the devils in purgatory, Thomas Aquinas teaches: "As after the Judgment day the Divine justice will kindle the fire with which the damned will be punished for ever, even so now the elect are cleansed after this life by the Divine justice alone, and neither by the ministry of the demons whom they have vanquished, nor by the ministry of the angels who would not inflict such tortures on their fellow-citizens. It is, however, possible that they take them to the place of punishment: also that even the demons, who rejoice in the punishment of man, accompany them and stand by while they are being cleansed, both that they may be sated with their pains, and that when these leave their bodies, they may find something of their own in them." (*S.Th.*, Supplementum Tertiae Partis, appendix I, q.2, a.3). It is worth to notice that in the spiritual journey, the soul perceives purification as hell. See also footnote 33.

¹²³ *La Probatione* I, pp. 73-74.: "ma che lo vede sempre senza partirseglì mai con l'occhio della mente, come (per similitudine) fa una creatura quando vede qualche cosa con l'occhio corporale che gli rimane quella cosa nella mente tanto espressa che gli pare, ancor che non la vegga corporalmente, sempre vederla."

¹²⁴ *La Probatione* I, pp. 52, 53.

¹²⁵ *La Probatione* I, p. 52.: "O che luogo orrendo è questo, pieno di Demoni sì spaventosi e brutti, le pene sì crudele e intollerabile".

so near to hell, these poor souls hear the devilish rumours and are punished in the place of “the gnashing of teeth and confusion to be found down there”.¹²⁶ The mystic visits also the disobedient ones who had to take upon them heavy weights whilst being lapidated.¹²⁷ The impatient suffered from being continuously consumed similar to the way “we squeeze something to take out the essence”.¹²⁸ Even the liars find themselves placed near to hell. These have great pains in their mouths. Maria Maddalena “sees that melted lead was poured in the throat of these souls who were continuously trembling and blazing with fire”.¹²⁹ According to the mystic those who sin out of frailty do not suffer too much in purgatory, whilst those who are covetous suffer from all the punishments and torments inasmuch as here on earth they were never satisfied.¹³⁰ These souls were surrounded and devoured by vipers, scorpions and serpents, others where being melted like lead, remoulded and given to beasts.¹³¹ This image of sinner souls which are melted like lead in Purgatory, reminds the reader of another rapture which de’ Pazzi had on 4th January 1584, confirming perhaps that in the mystic’s thought, Purgatory is the paradigm of purification made possible in the spiritual journey through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Praying in front of the novitiate crib, the mystic contemplates in a vision the dead body of Lord placed in the hands of the Virgin. Perhaps, the crib scene of the nativity with Mary holding the child Jesus brought to her mind the image of Our Lady of Sorrows. In this vision, the visionary contemplates the holy Wounds of Jesus in the form of four ardent furnaces. She explains that “metal is placed

¹²⁶ *La Probatione* I, p. 52.: E vedeva che oltre all’altre pene erano passati con ferri da un canto all’altro e infilzati, e poi erano trebbiati e sminuzzati con coltelli molto crudeli e aspri [...]. Et intese che questi sì crudelmente tormentati erano gli ipocriti e erano molto presso all’inferno. E dice che quelli che sono più presso all’inferno partecipando di quelli strepiti e romori, stridor di denti e confusione che è laggiù”. Later on the mystic would reveal that a particular nun did not suffer this punishment in Purgatory because of her life time dedication to animate the chanting of psalms in the community during liturgical prayer. Cf. *La Probatione* II, p. 17.

¹²⁷ *La Probatione* I, p. 52. Dante reserves the heavy weights punishment for the proud souls. Cf. *Purgatorio*, Canto X, 100-139.

¹²⁸ *La Probatione* I, p. 53.: “come faremo noi a spremere qual che cosa per cavarne il sugo.”

¹²⁹ *La Probatione* I, p. 54.: “E vedeva che gli era messo giù per la gola del’ piombo strutto, pareva a lei, e continuamente ardevano e tremavano”.

¹³⁰ *La Probatione* I, p. 53.

¹³¹ *La Probatione* I, p. 54.: “sono circondati e devorati da serpe, scarpioni, botte e serpenti. Ve n’è ancora che erano a modo di piombo stutti e consumati, e di poi ritornavano interi e erano dati alle bestie, e così erano crudelmente tormentati.”

in the first (furnace)”¹³² to be melted so that it can be easily worked. Behind this image, which the saint uses to describe the sinners who undergo conversion, puts forward the idea of docility and surrender to God’s will. Consequently, the nuns explain that

She understood that the wounds of the feet were the first furnace, into which sinners, symbolised by hard metal, enter. Placed in fire, this metal is softened becoming apt to be used according to one’s requirements. Similarly, entering in the furnace of the wound of Jesus’ feet, the sinner abandons the hardness of his sin becoming so tender through contrition and sorrow, that he can be shaped without any difficulty. From here, the sinner is taken to the wound of the left hand, namely, the furnace into which stones are fired to make quicklime and bricks for building purposes. When the sinner is converted, he becomes like quicklime and bricks useful for the construction of the Holy Church. Saint Paul and Saint Mary Magdalene were two of these.¹³³

Continuing her journey through purgatory, de’ Pazzi then finds herself in a place “full of all possible sorts of filth”. The souls in there were plunged in something similar to mud whilst having their eyes plucked out. Maria Maddalena understands that these are the impure souls, so she runs away from them.¹³⁴ In line with the Carmelite spiritual tradition, Maria Maddalena so highly esteems the virtue of purity, understood more of a total adherence to God than of physical integrity, that Carmel of the Ancient Observance *eam consideravit ut Sanctam ‘suam’ per excellentiam*.¹³⁵ In one of the mystical experiences

¹³² *Secondo Colloquio*, in *I Colloqui* I, p. 67.: “Nella prima si mette il’ferro”.

¹³³ *Secondo Colloquio*, in *I Colloqui* I, p. 67.: “ La prima fornace intendeva esser la piaga de’ piedi, nella quale entrano e’ peccatori, significati per il’ferro che è duro, il’ quale quando è messo nel’ fuoco, si intenerisce, et se ne fa poi quello che si vuole. Così il peccatore entrando in questa fornace della piaga de’ piedi di Jesu, diventa tenero dalla durezza del’suo peccato, et ne ha contritione, et se ne pente, tanto che se ne può fare quello che si vuole. Di qui va poi alla piaga della mano sinistra, che è quella fornace dove si cuocono e’ sassi, che fanno poi calcina e mattoni per murare, però che il’peccatore quando è poi convertito, diventa calcina e mattone per accrescere all’edificio della Santa Chiesa. Et di questi ne fu uno San Pulo, e Santa Maria Maddalena”.

¹³⁴ *La Probatione* I, p. 54.: “E andando più oltre ne vedde certi altri, e disse con nausea: ‘Questi sono in un luogo pieno di tutte le sorte di sporcitie che si possono mai trovare. I, che luogo inmondo è questo?’ E vedeva che erano rinvolti in una cosa molto sozza e inmonda, come sarebbe a dire a modo nostro, fango e simil cose. Gli era ancora cavato gli occhi e pativono assai in questo membro; e questi tali erano gli inmondi e impuri, da i quali si partì presto presto, come dire fuggendo”.

¹³⁵ VALERIUS HOPPENBROUWERS, O.CARM., *Virgo Purissima et vita spiritualis*, in *Carmelus* I/2 (1954), p. 269. Cf. *Revelatione e intelligentie*, edited by Pelagio Visentin, in *Tutte le opere di Santa Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi dai manoscritti originali*, vol. 1, directed by Fulvio Nardoni, Florence 1964, p. 80. hereafter *Revelatione*. See also footnote 39.

to be found in the text *Revelatione e intelligentie*, Maria Maddalena, in dialogue with the Blessed Virgin declares: “Purity is the source of every being”.¹³⁶ The purpose of Purgatory is to render pure the souls therein detained. Highly significant is the fact that Maria Maddalena understands that her brother’s soul will be taken to heaven on the feast day of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.¹³⁷ On 7th September 1590, “the vigil of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin” the mystic, also in a vision, sees her mother’s soul entering the glory of heaven.¹³⁸ The spiritual assistance of the Blessed Virgin Mary to purging souls is referred to also in another vision, where the mystic understands that a particular nun, who appeared to her “very pure and beautiful”, found rest (*refrigerio*) in seeing the Blessed Virgin.¹³⁹

Maria Maddalena herself feels the spiritual assistance of the Blessed Virgin during the period of probation. On 27th May 1587, the mystic asks the Virgin Mary to help her being conformed to the will of God.¹⁴⁰ Then on 8th September, whilst being continuously tempted against purity and terrified by the vision of the devils, she asks the assistance of the Virgin Mary, who finally on 17th of the same month “covered her with a most candid veil” confirming her in the virtue of purity.¹⁴¹ Similarly on 1st November 1587, the Virgin Mary assists the mystic in her tribulations, freeing her from the vision of the devils and

¹³⁶ *Revelatione*, p. 79.: “La purità è la fonte di ogni essere”.

¹³⁷ *La Probatione I*, p. 64.: “Intese in questo ratto come il’ suo fratello, che la vedde a’ di passati nelle pene del’ purgatorio, andrebbe in paradiso questa futura solennità della natività della Vergine SS.ma.”.

¹³⁸ *La Probatione II*, pp. 14-15.: “Venerdì addì 7 di settembre 1590, che era la vigilia della natività della Vergine S.ma e faceva appunto 15 di che la sua honoranda madre era passata della vita presente alla futura, fu tirata di nuovo dal’ suo Signore a intendere come essa la mattina, appunto in su l’hora che la spirò, era ita in paradiso, et la vidde tutta gloriosa essere in fra que’ Santi che godono quell’esser giusto di Dio, per esser lei stata tanta giusta e retta in questo mondo”.

¹³⁹ *La Probatione I*, p. 218.: “E essendo il’ suo corpo in chiesa, la mattina di poi mentre che si diceva le Messe, essa fu rapita in estasi e fugli mostro l’anima della detta suora che era in purgatorio, la quale non gli dava spavento, ma più presto contento e allegrezza per esser molto pura e bella, se bene gli mancava ancora assai per potere arrivare alla gloria [...]. Et perché in questo mondo haveva patito assai per essere stata cieca da uno occhio, in purgatorio meritava di vedere alcuna volta la Vergine S.ma, della qual vista prendeva gran refrigerio”.

¹⁴⁰ *La Probatione I*, pp. 57-58.

¹⁴¹ *La Probatione I*, p. 114.: “E stando in questo desiderio, gli apparve la detta Mamma S.ma. E per mostrargli che non vuto offeso Dio, anzi havuto vinto con gran fortezza la detta tentatione, la coperse tutta cor un candidissimo velo e sentì nell’interior suo un certo legamento e stringimento che da lei stessa non lo potette dare ad intendere alla m. priora (dalla quale sforzata conferì questa cosa)”.

their snares by clothing her with the Carmelite habit. During this rapture, de' Pazzi renews her profession in the hands of the Virgin Mary.¹⁴²

During her journey in Purgatory, de' Pazzi visits also the proud and the ambitious, namely those who sought worldly honours. These were also surrounded by devils whilst being cruelly beaten and trampled upon.¹⁴³ Finally, she sees that the ungrateful, besides having to endure the pains of fire and ice, were punished by being plunged in molten lead and filth. Those who did not have any particular vice, but took part in all vices, in Purgatory these souls share in all sufferings, even though not with the same intensity.¹⁴⁴

EPILOGUE

*“So I beseech you, tell me why did you grant me this vision now”.*¹⁴⁵
The purpose of the revelations on Purgatory

After going around the monastery's garden completing her imaginary two hour journey in Purgatory, Maria Maddalena ended her understanding of the mystery of purification of souls. Even though the mystic's frightful journey seems to be more a descent into the underworld rather than an ascent, her going round the garden, defined by the nuns with the verbs: *girare e circuire*,¹⁴⁶ reminds nonetheless of Dante's image of a circular terraced island mountain which gives a sense of graduality in the journey towards full purification. “Like Dante, in visiting the circles of purgatory Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi pauses and then moves on, showing both terror and pity. Indeed, as she herself clarifies to her sisters after this rapture, the mystic's suffering results from her compassion for the souls”.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² *La Probatione* I, p. 120.: “E gli apparve la Mamma S.ma, la quale la rivestì interiormente del' santo habito; e essa a ogni cosa che riceveva, diceva quel verso che usiamo dire quando ci vestiamo, cioè: alla tonaca: *accipio*; alla cintola: *sint lumbi mei precinti*, e così a tutte l'altre. Poi di nuovo fece la professione in mano della Vergine S.ma, e doppo che ebbe detto molte cose e ringraziato Jesu, la Vergine Maria e tutti e' Santi di questi doni, si risentì dal' ratto”.

¹⁴³ *La Probatione* I, p. 55.

¹⁴⁴ *La Probatione* I, p. 55.

¹⁴⁵ *La Probatione* I, p. 55: “De dimmi, dico, perché m'hai dato tal vista hora”.

¹⁴⁶ *La Probatione* I, pp. 48,55.

¹⁴⁷ MAGGI, *Satan's Rhetoric*, p. 163.

Coming out of the garden, the mystic, eventually comes out from Purgatory. Always in rapture, while dialoguing with the Lord she begs him not to give her anymore similar visions of the purging pains.¹⁴⁸ Unfortunately, Maria Pacifica del Tovaglia, records only a small and fragmented section of the mystic's long dialogue with Jesus,¹⁴⁹ however the material recorded summarises the purpose and essence of de' Pazzi's rapture on Purgatory. In fact the mystic asks a question to the Lord on the purpose of such an experience, a question which she nonetheless tries to answer in this way:

So, tell me, my Spouse, because this evening you want me to call you by this sweet name of Spouse whilst lowering yourself to speak to me so familiarly. So, I beseech you, tell me why did you grant me this vision now, while in the past I never had any light or understanding of it in this way?... (And after being hesitant for little bit she continued): "Oh because you wished to satisfy my desire (this desire was to get to know if her brother was saved)? And because usually more fervent prayers are offered for the souls, and also because I will come to acknowledge more your purity and to hate that which your bride Catherine hated here on earth, namely sin. And also to cherish more virtue".¹⁵⁰

Contemplating the mystery of Purgatory and its pains endured by the suffering souls, Maria Maddalena ever more recognizes the veracity of God's purity which does not admit the slightest blemish in those who are to be united with him. Purgatory, is the work of God's infinite goodness and mercy, who passes those souls who are abandoned to his will, from the necessary purification that they may be united with him in glory. In this light, at the end of the vision, the mystic abandons her brother's soul in God's goodness and mercy:

My Lord, (glorify him) whenever you like, and blessed is he because this will be soon. And even if the pains are great, these are fitting for the future, indescribable and incomprehensible glory which you prepared

¹⁴⁸ *La Probatione I*, p. 55.

¹⁴⁹ *La Probatione I*, p. 55: "E stando pure in ratto disse molte cose, delle quale ne noterò alcune, e fra l'altre come chiese gratia a Jesu che non gli mostrassi tal vista."

¹⁵⁰ *La Probatione I*, pp. 55-56: "Deh, dimmi, o Sposo mio, poiché vuoi in questa sera io ti chiami per questo dolce nome di Sposo e ti degni sì familiarmente parlar meco. Deh dimmi, dico, perché m' hai dato tal vista hora, che mai per il' tempo passato non ho havuto tal lume né penetratola in questo modo?' ... (E stata un poco soggiunse): 'O perché hai voluto satisfaire al' desiderio mio (e tal desiderio era di sapere se il' suo fratello era salvo)? E perché in generale si faccia più ferventemente oratione per loro, e ancora perché io conosca maggiormente la tua purità e odii quel che odiava qui la tua sposa Catherina, cioè il' peccato, e ami la virtù'".

for us. And I tell you, my God, that never I would have offered him in this particular way to you if it was not for that which was revealed to me, and because I have an obligation towards him. From now on I do not want to remember (him) anymore, in a way that heartens me, but I want to leave him in your goodness and mercy.¹⁵¹

The ultimate fiery purification is reserved for those souls who did not consent God's charity to purify them here on earth. Indeed, the spiritual journey is a purifying path which leads the souls to live here on earth the divine life. Remarkable is Dante's insight to place on the top of Mount Purgatory, the Earthly Paradise.¹⁵² After ascending the seven terraces of this lofty mountain, Dante has to pass through fire to reach beatitude (*Beatrice*) in the Garden of Eden. *Beatrice* will then lead him to the glory of heaven.¹⁵³ Is this not an affirmation of the much needed purification of our motivations so that we may, here on earth, come to acquire that primordial terrestrial beatitude, intended by God when creating heaven and earth, seeing that all was good and beautiful? (*Gen* 1: 10,12, 18, 21, 25).

John of the Cross, compares this passive night of abandonment in the purifying fire of divine charity and Purgatory. This purification leads those on the spiritual journey to live in love. Through this "horrible night" God purifies and illumines those who, on earth, abandon themselves in him by the same illumination with which he purges and illumines those in heaven.¹⁵⁴ John of the Cross explains this purgation as follows:

Therefore, we can observe that just as this dark night of loving fire purges in darkness, it also enkindles the soul in darkness. We can also see that, just as in the other life, the spirits are purged with a dark material fire, so in this life are purged and purified with a loving, dark and spiritual fire. For this is the difference: These are purified in the other life by fire, but here on earth they are purified and illumined only

¹⁵¹ *La Probatione* I, p. 56: "Signor mio, sia quando a te piace, e beato a lui che sarà ben presto. E se bene son grande le pene, non però son condegne alla futura, inenarrabile e incomprensibil gloria che ci hai preparata. E ti dico, Iddio mio, che mai te l'harei offerto imparticolare se non fussi, o se non è, almanco mi è stato dato ad intendere, che io gli sono più obligata; e da hora inanzi non me ne vo' più ricordare in modo che passi el' cuor mio, ma lo vo' lassar tutto alla tua bontà e misericordia'".

¹⁵² *Purgatorio*, Canto XXVII, 123-142; Cantos XXVIII-XXXIII.

¹⁵³ *Purgatorio*, Cantos XXVIII – XXXIII; *Paradiso*, Cantos I-XXX.

¹⁵⁴ *Noche oscura* II/12,1: *Obras*, p. 502: "Dice cómo esta horrible noche es purgatorio, y cómo en ella ilumina la divina sabiduría a los hombres en el suelo con la misma iluminación que purga e ilumina a los ángeles en el cielo".

by love; that love which David asked for himself when he said: *Cor mundum crea in me Deus*, etc. (Ps. 50,12); because purity of heart is nothing less than the love and grace of God. The *pure of heart* are called *blessed* by our Savior (Mt. 5,8), and this is equivalent to saying they are “enamoured”, for blessedness comes from nothing else but love. ¹⁵⁵

Thus, Maria Maddalena asks: “How can we prepare ourselves, to be found worthy of coming to you, my Spouse?”¹⁵⁶ The answer should be clear after this extensive absorbing journey in Purgatory: “Stripping the self in everything and for everything, whilst being clothed in you, living with a pure, rightful and sincere intention”.¹⁵⁷

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¹⁵⁵ *Noche oscura* III/12,1: *Obras*, p. 502: “Por lo dicho echaremos de ver cómo esta oscura noche de fuego amoroso, así como a oscuras va purgando, así a oscuras va al alma inflamando. Echaremos de ver también cómo, así como se purgan los espíritus en la otra vida con fuego tenebroso material, en esta vida se purgan y limpian con fuego amoroso tenebroso espiritual; porque ésta es la diferencia: que allá se limpian con fuego, y acá se limpian e iluminan solo con amor. El cual amor pidió David cuando dijo: *Cor mundum crea in me*, etc. (*Sal* 50, 12). Porque la limpieza de corazón no es menos que el amor y gracia de Dios; porque *los limpios de corazón* son llamados por nuestro salvador *bienaventurados* (*Mt* 5, 8), lo cual es tanto como decir «enamorados», pues que la bienaventuranza no se da por menos que amor”.

¹⁵⁶ *La Probatione* I, p. 56.: “Che preparatione si potrebbe fare, o Sposo mio, per venire in qualche parte degnamente a te?”

¹⁵⁷ *La Probatione* I, p. 57: “Spogliarsi in tutto e per tutto di se stessa e vestirsi di te e andarvi con pura, retta e sincera intentione».