

## MARY MAGDALEN DE PAZZI (1566-1607)

Saint

I. Life. II. Love for the Church. III. Ecstasies. IV. Works. V. Doctrine. VI. Cult. VII. Iconography.

I. LIFE. «Sister Mary Magdalen was born in the city of Florence on the 2nd day of April, 1566. Her father was named Sire Camillus di Geri de'Pazzi, and her mother Magdalen Mary /daughter/ of Sire Lawrence Buondelmonti. At Baptism she received the name of Catherine.» (*Breve Ragguaglio della vita* /Short Report on her life/, published for the first time in *I quaranta giorni* /The forty days/ in the edition of Herman of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Florence, 1960, p. 69). On the following day, April 3, at 10 o'clock in the morning, she received Baptism in the oratory of St. John the Baptist. On Feb. 25, 1574, she entered the monastery of Little St. John of the Knights /S. Giovannino dei Cavalieri/ for the first time as a pupil, and was entrusted to the care of her maternal aunt, Sister Alexandra Buondelmonti (*Libro dei Ricordi del monastero di S. Giovannino di via S. Gallo* /Book of Memories of the monastery of Little St. John in the Street of St. Gaul/, Arch, of the State of Florence, Suppressed Religious Corporations, 133, f. 60, p. 166).

On March 25, 1576, at the age of ten, she received Holy Communion for the first time, in the church of Little St. John, which at that time was served by the Jesuits. On April 19 she made a vow of perpetual virginity to God. Towards evening on the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle, Nov. 30, 1578, she had her first ecstasy, in the presence of her mother, Lady Mary, while she was in the garden of their villa of Parugiano near Prato.

When Sire Camillus de'Pazzi, father of the saint, was sent as commissary to Cortona by the grand duke of Tuscany, Francis I, Catherine, on March 16, 1580, was again. «placed in keeping» at the monastery of the Ladies of Little St. John. This was done in following the advice of the Jesuit Peter Blanca, on condition that she would be permitted to receive Holy Communion on all Sundays and holydays, an unusual practice in those times. On the feast of the Ascension, while she was still at Little St. John's, she experienced an excess of love and an extraordinary understanding of the greatness of God and of His grace, in 1581 she left the monastery of Little St. John and returned to her family. On Aug. 14, 1582, she entered the monastery of the Carmelite nuns of St. Mary of the Angels for a fifteen-day stay, in order to become acquainted with the rule and to see if it would correspond to the divine call and to her particular tendencies. The rule fitted her intimate desires; and so she decided to choose this monastery. She was aided in her choice by the fact that the Carmelites, by exceptional permission, could receive Holy Communion every day.

On Dec. 1, 1582, the Saturday preceding the first Sunday of Advent, Catherine crossed for ever the threshold of the cloister and entered to become a nun among the Carmelites of St. Mary of the Angels. On Dec. 8, the chapter of the monastery unanimously accepted the new postulant. On Jan. 3, 1583, Catherine de'Pazzi was clothed in the Carmelite habit and took the name of Sister Mary Magdalen, thus

beginning her year of novitiate. During the Advent of that year she experienced an excess of love like that which she had had as a child in the villa of Parugiano. During the first days of March of 1584 a mysterious malady manifested itself: «one morning she was overcome by a high fever together with a harsh cough, with severe pains in the area of her chest and below her ribs... Day and night she constantly remained seated on her bed, without ever being able to lie down, because of the vehemence of her cough. She hardly ever slept or, indeed, did so little that it is something incredible. The same was true of her eating, so that she was wasting away little by little... After she had been sick for two months, the doctors gave her up for lost, whence the superiors /the prioress, Sister Victoria Contugi, and the mistress of novices, Sister Evangelist del Giocondo/ decided to have her make her holy profession. This was done on the 27th day of May, 1584, during the morning of /the feast of/ the Most Holy Trinity» (*Breve Ragguaglio*, pp. 90-2).

Mary Magdalen made her profession «on a cot arranged before the altar of the Virgin» (*Processes*, I p. 44) and was then immediately brought back to the infirmary. From that moment on there began a surprising period of ecstasies; every day after Communion she remained ecstatic for two or three hours. Sometimes she had new and repeated excesses of love during the day as well, with the renewal of the divine favors. The experience lasted uninterruptedly for forty days, during which the following mystical phenomena occurred and should be remembered: a vision of the drama of the Passion (especially noteworthy is that of June 8), the exchange of her heart with that of Jesus (June 10), the first invisible impression of the stigmata (June 28). Moreover, on July 6 she received the crown of thorns from Our Lord, in the presence of St. Catherine of Siena and of St. Augustine; and she was to suffer the mysterious pain of the crown for the rest of her life.

She was cured on July 16 at the intercession of the Blessed Mary Bagnesi; and subsequently the life of Mary Magdalen became a succession of visions, ecstasies, other mystical phenomena, penances and trials. On the evening of March 24, 1585, the vigil of the Annunciation, St. Augustine wrote the words «*Verbum caro factum est*» /The Word was made flesh/ on her heart. On April 15 the invisible stigmata were imprinted on her soul permanently; on the 28th she received a ring from Jesus, the seal of her mystical espousal with Him. On Friday, May 17, she had the longest of any of her ecstasies until then. It began on the afternoon of Friday and was prolonged for forty hours, until the following Sunday morning. On the 21st she received the Lord's command to take only bread and water as nourishment, except on Sundays and holydays, on which days she would be able to take «Lenten foods.» Furthermore, Jesus ordered her to rest only five hours a day, on a straw mattress, in satisfaction, for the offenses that are committed against Him» (II, p. 877 /III, 285/). (These citations refer to the original manuscripts of the *Ecstasies*: the Roman numerals indicate the volume; the others, the pages, which are also carried in the margin of the complete edition of Florence, 1960-6. /The numbers in the virgules indicate the volume and pages of the English edition, Fatima, 1969-75/).

On the vigil of Pentecost, June 8, 1585, began the second great cycle of ecstasies, which went on uninterruptedly for eight days. «During all this time she constantly remained rapt in an excess of mind, both day and night, except that for the period of about two hours /each day/ that was granted her to recite the office, take some little bit of food and a bit of rest. Seven times she received the Holy Spirit in different forms, each morning at the hour of Tierce /about 9 o'clock/: once as fire, once as a river, once as a dove, as a column, and so forth» (III, 1 /IV, 11/). On June 16, the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, her great trial began; called «a den of lions», it was to last for five years. The saint had already spent a year in desolating spiritual aridity when, on July 20, 1586, «to the great wonder» of the nuns, she suddenly went into ecstasy while she was reciting the divine office. But this ecstasy was one of particular «affliction and sorrow» (IV, 9 /TV; 201/). God communicated to her that He wished to alleviate the pressure of temptation and to mitigate the trial, «until October,» in order to give her light and the ability to undertake a great work: «the renovation of the Church and particularly of religious» (1. c). From that day on Mary Magdalen had similar ecstasies from time to time.

In the month of August she spent four days and four nights (from the 11th till the 15th) in continuous rapture, «except for the time when she said the divine office, ate a bit of bread and drank a bit of water ... which was /only/ a short while» {TV, 10./IV, 201/; V, 1 /I, 146/}. God revealed to her that the Church had need, of reform. All were called to contribute their share. She, furthermore, had a special mission: to remind religious and the higher dignitaries of the Church of the urgency of their task. The saint trembled at this revelation, because it contrasted so enormously with her humility; she would have preferred death a thousand times. Fearing that she was deceived, she spoke of the matter to her superiors and asked counsel of several religious known for their prudence and holiness of life, such as Father Angelus, the Dominican, and Father Fabbrini, the Jesuit (V, 9 /I, 153/). All encouraged her to follow God's commands without hesitation, since these commands were clear, decisive, and repeated; therefore, it was absolutely necessary that she obey. And for this reason «in her abstraction of mind, she wrote some letters, in favor of such a renewal, to the Supreme Pontiff and to other prelates and servants of God» (V, 1 /I, 145/).

In Oct. of 1586 the saint left the novitiate. Her brother Alamanno died on July 14, 1587; and she saw his soul painfully suffering in purgatory. On Feb. 25, 1588, she contemplated Jesus in His passion, and from Him she received the singular gift of «the bundle of His passion, as He gave it to St. Bernard» (IV, 189 /IV, 291/). On Nov. 25 of the same year the dire trials to which she was exposed (the temptations to leave the convent and to kill herself) reached their peak. On Sept. 30, 1589, Mother Evangelist del Giocondo was elected mistress of novices and Sister Mary Magdalen received the charge of assistant mistress. On Easter Sunday, April 22, 1590, the Lord asked her to make «another Lent of fifty days, and she fasted in her usual way, on only bread and water,» until the feast of the Holy Spirit (June 10). On this feast she was finally freed from the «den of lions.» As her reward, she received great gifts and divine communications. On Aug. 24, 1590, her mother, Lady Mary Buondelmonti; died. Mary Magdalen contemplated her as «happy and content in the pains of purgatory,» and understood what great joy

had been prepared for her in paradise because of the good and the charity that she had done to her neighbor during her lifetime. Fifteen days later, on Sept. 7, she saw her mother join the saints in paradise.

In 1591 the confessor and administrator of the monastery, Father Augustine Campi da Pontremoli, died; Canon Francis Benvenuti succeeded him. On March 26, 1592, in a prolonged ecstasy, Mary Magdalen shared in the sorrows of the passion, as she had already done seven years before. On May 3, 1592, the year in which she was entrusted with the office of sacristan, she had a great excess of love: she ran through the monastery, she rang the bells to call all souls «to love Love» (IV, 708 /V, 235/). On May 1, 1595, she asked the Lord for «naked suffering.» This request of the saint is personally attested to by Mother Evangelist del Giocondo, by Sister Pacifica del Tovaglia, by Sister Mary Christine Pazzi, and by Sister Mary Grace Pazzi, the saint's niece. But the Lord was to grant her this grace only nine years later. In this same year, 1595, she was elected mistress of the newly professed; and in the chapter of Oct. 2, 1598, she was chosen as mistress of novices. With June 24, 1604, on which date she remained in rapture all day, the ecstasies ended and the period of «naked suffering» began, to continue until her death.

Contrary to her desire, in the elections of 1604 the chapter elected her sub-prioress. A short while later she became ill; this was the beginning of three years of physical and moral sufferings never before experienced by her. After Francis Benvenuti died in 1605, Father Vincent Puccini, the first and principal biographer of the saint, was chosen confessor of the monastery. On May 13, 1607, Mary Magdalen received the anointing of the sick; at eight o'clock of Friday, May 25, her agony began and at two o'clock in the afternoon she died. The sisters who surrounded her recited the Creed of St. Athanasius, the profession of faith in the Trinity that had made the saint ecstatic from the first years of her life.

A year after her death the nuns obtained permission to bring the remains of their saintly sister into the cloister, and Father Puccini presided at the exhumation of the body. As soon as the coffin had been opened, this body appeared fresh, whole, flexible. Only the clothing was wet, because the place where she had been buried was humid, and water had oozed though. In 1611 the processes for beatification were begun, after many miracles had been granted through her intercession. All the religious who had known her were invited to testify, and this they did «in a convincing and precise manner.» Noteworthy for their extent and content were the testimonies of Mother Evangelist del Giocondo and of Sister Pacifica del Tovaglia, an intimate childhood friend of the saint. Pope Urban VIII beatified Sister Mary Magdalen on May 8, 1626; and in 1662 the process for canonization was opened. Pope Clement IX proclaimed her a saint on April 28, 1669.

II. LOVE FOR THE CHURCH. Widely documented in our own day is the fact that several religious circles of sixteenth-century Italy were gripped by the desire of a reform of the Church, a desire that seems to have become an obsession after the Protestant revolt and that marked all Italian spirituality in such a profound manner that it was found very much alive even among those souls who were apparently farthest from worldly events.

One of most impassioned of the contemplatives of this time who called for the reform of the Church and the renewal of religious life was undoubtedly Mary Magdalen de'Pazzi. Retirement and detachment from the world conferred on this eminent contemplative, who had in a short time reached the transformation of love, a great capacity for ecclesial expansiveness, which is the surest sign of every authentic mystical experience.

Knowledge of the serious evils that afflicted the religious society of her time aroused anguished reflections in Mary Magdalen, in whom mystical impulses were united to the most ardent desire for the reform and expansion of the Church. Her burning love for God became concrete and was diffused by a social sensitivity that separated her from every form of indifferent solitude and made her participate, even while she always remained within the walls of her monastery, in the tumultuous life around here. For this reason, as has often been noted, she was open to the main problems of the counter-reformation and to the reform-minded preoccupations of various Italian spiritual movements. Thus her life and her works logically remain bound, above all, by the force of that particular historical moment, to themes of ecclesial character.

Mary Magdalen not only lived a life of prayer and of sacrifice, offering herself for the diffusion of the kingdom of God and the salvation of souls, which latter were immensely dear to her because ransomed by the most precious blood of Jesus, but she also prayed for and ardently promoted the reform of the Church. Her anxiety for the Church, therefore, moved in two directions: externally, towards the expansion of the Church; and internally, towards its reform.

At the processes for beatification her sisters in Carmel witnessed to how great was her passion for the salvation of souls and the spread of the kingdom of God. Among others, Mother Evangelist del Giacondo, who was her mistress of novices and a guide throughout her religious life, affirmed that she had heard the saint say several times «that for the salvation of souls she would have willingly deprived herself of every taste and contentment that the grace of God brought to her, provided that there remained the will of not offending Him. She often begged God for the salvation of souls in various ways: once, for as many souls as she took steps through the convent; at another time, for as many words as she recited at the divine office. And she invited the sisters to do likewise. And once she said that if the Lord had asked her what reward she wished, as He did to St. Thomas Aquinas, she would have asked for the salvation of souls. Not an hour passed, so to speak, that she did not pronounce some word that clearly revealed this burning longing, such as: Let us offer the blood of Jesus for sinners! Let us ask for some souls! And sometimes she seemed to be wasting away as she said: I would like to be able to go among the unbelievers and be able to take those little Indians and teach them the basics of our faith, so that Jesus would have those souls and they would have Jesus. And I remember that, when letters from Japan were read at table, with reports that the Jesuit Fathers give of the conversion of those souls and of the fact that some of the Fathers were martyred for our holy faith, she seemed to melt, and she showed an ardent desire to be in those lands so that she could both arouse those creatures and also be able to lay down her life and to suffer those torments and martyrdoms for the love of Jesus and for the conversion of those souls...

Moreover, she was so ardent in praying for the salvation of those souls and she did this with so much affection that very often in saying those prayers she was rapt in ecstasy.» (I, p. 100).

The offer made during the night of Monday, May 6, 1585, in which the Lord invited the saint «to renew the body of Holy Church with My blood» (II, 527 /III, 75/) has remained famous. The nineteen-year-old religious was fully prepared to gather the rain of: blood and of merits which Jesus showered on His Church she offered «the infinite drops of blood /shed by the Word/ in such great abundance when He was beaten at the pillar.» Turning directly to Him, she added: «And just as You shed it from all Your members, so I offer You the blood for all the members of Holy Church, of which You are the head and these creatures /are/ Your members» (II, 541 /III, 84/).

In order that the «christs,» i. e., the priests, would resume being the light of the world (II, 633 /III, 137/); that her «little virgins,» the sisters, would not be numbered among the foolish (II, 300 /HI, 231/), that infidels and heretics would enter or reenter God's fold (H, 547, 563 III, 88-9, 93), and that all souls would be saved and would allow themselves to «be penetrated by the blood of Jesus» (II, 513 /III, 66/), «for every moment of time, she would suffer martyrdom and a thousand deaths» (II, 865 /in, 277/) and in this way «it would seem to me that I was glorious» (II, 878 /III, 285/). She would have liked to become water so that she might bathe all hearts (II, 630 /III, 135/); she have liked to fly everywhere, to make herself heard by everyone, «to place ... this love and this affection in the hearts of creatures» (II, 631 /III, 136/). If possible, she would have led all unbelieving souls «into the bosom of Holy Church,» so that «with its sweet breaths, it would purge them of their infidelity, it «would regenerate them, just as a mother does her little children, and would then place them at her sweet and delicate breasts, suckling them with the sweet milk of the most holy sacraments. Oh, how well she would suckle and nourish them at her breast! Oh, if I could, how willingly would I do so!» (II, 547 /III, 89/).

The manuscripts of the Ecstasies on innumerable occasions stress the «anxious desire» (HI, 8 /IV, 16/), the ardor and the burning passion of the saint for the «renovation of the Church.» Appreciating her mystical priesthood as she did, she constantly kept her hands raised to heaven for this intention, and with her hands also her heart. She offered the infinite merits of the most precious blood of Jesus to the holiness of God and was ready to give, a thousand times, «her soul and her body for the salvation of her neighbors» (III, 86 /IV, 63/).

III. THE ECSTASIES. Especially impressive in the life of Mary Magdalen was a factor which presents her to modern sensitivities not only as an exceptional, but also as a difficult personage to understand. This factor was the continual ecstasies that resulted in her spending a good part of her earthly pilgrimage... beyond the earth! According to the unanimous testimony of her sisters in religion, these ecstasies were, at some periods of her life, continual and innumerable. «She was rapt in ecstasy so often,» asserts Sister Mary Pacifica, «that I, for my part, think it impossible to be able to enumerate them all. For she was rapt in ecstasy not only while at prayer, but also at whatever kind of

activity she was engaged in. At times whole months passed during which she never spent a day in which she was not rapt in God for some period of time» (*Process*, I, p. 290; see also pp. 174, 342, etc.).

The ecstasies overtook and halted the saint in all sorts of places and attitudes: «wanting to fold her napkin at table» (IV, 135 /IV, 262/); while she was reciting the divine office, «sitting, with the psalter in her open hand and her hands upon her knees, so that she seemed exactly a Virgin Mary» (II, 490 /III, 49/; II, 807 /III, 241/; III, 201 /IV, 137/); leaning against a post (II, 296 /II, 228/); also during the divine office, holding her breviary in one hand and a rather heavy statue of Our Lady in the other (IV, 143 /IV, 266-7/); while she was undressing (II, 267 /II, 207/); while she was drawing water; «with one hand resting on the folding stall of the choir» (H, 202 /II, 159/). She was unexpectedly rapt in ecstasy while she was speaking with the mother mistress; meanwhile she remained seated, with her eyes open and steady, «for she did not blink them at all, but held them fixed — with /such/ a happy face and mouth that she seemed to be laughing. And she remained in this fashion all the night» (II, 232 /II, 180/). Several times she was found in ecstasy kneeling on her bed (II, 104, 129, 244, 248 /II, 87, 104, 189, 193/). «She remained in rapture with her hands in a basin of cloths that she was washing; and she remained immobile for about an hour and a half, always in that way, with her eyes open, and motionless as a dead person» (II, 57 /II, 52/). «While she was making bread or sweeping» (*Process*, I, p. 174); «once with the bread and the knife in her hand» (*ib.*, p. 980), at other times «with a morsel in her mouth, for a lengthy period of time» (*ib.*, pp. 481, 174). Normally during Communion time and on the occasion of clothings or professions (*ib.*, p. 1060). It was enough for her «to hear the word of God spoken or to see some works of His, even on a small and natural level» (*ib.*, p. 174), to be rapt in ecstasy.

It seems that she was also rapt during sleep. We know that «during the middle of the night she began to speak of divine things in a loud voice» (*ib.*, pp. 1061-1183). The novices, who slept in the same room, rose to group themselves around her bed, so that they might better hear «the very beautiful things of God» that she said.

If the number of her ecstasies is surprising, no less surprising and amazing is the way in which these occurred. The saint felt herself inwardly drawn by God more than «a magnet draws iron» (I, 227/1, 126/), and drawn with such force that she could not offer resistance to the mysterious impulse. She says, «I felt a certain attraction of God within myself. Nor did I know whither or to what He would wish to draw me or, in truth, lead me. And this happens to me quite often, /namely,/ that I feel this interior movement; but I do not know what it is or what it means until I have lost consciousness in that way» (II, 333 /II, 252-3/). If she was talking with someone, she found an increasing difficulty in «pronouncing her words clearly» (II, 451 /II, 23/); the words came more slowly and less vibrantly until they faded away altogether. She seemed to be called by a mysterious, interior voice; the manuscripts say that she went into ecstasy almost always «by way of a summons» (II, 466, 737 762, 912 /III, 33, 203, 218, 307; III, 11 /IV, 17/).

If she attempted to resist the order of the voice, she was forcibly thrown to the ground «in the manner of one asking forgiveness; she fell like lead, with a great noise, yet without doing herself any harm at all» (IV, 53 /IV, 221/; II, 877, 879 /III, 285, 286/). She remained in this position for several hours; her soul was as if «bound by love» (I, 228 /I, 127/).

Frequently, at the beginning of a rapture, she remained for some time «silent... with her eyes on the floor» (II, 499 /III, 57/), motionless as a dead person. Then her face, which was ordinarily thin, pallid and emaciated by her continual penances and her prolonged sicknesses, took on the color of a bright red and fresh rose, and her flesh seemed to be of «blood and milk» (II, 619 /III, 128/; *Process*, I, p. 418). Her eyes sparkled and became «resplendent like two shining stars» (II, 619 /III, 128/); ordinarily they were «raised up and fixed on high» (II, 914 /III, 309/), because of an unspecified other-worldly vision. Her person was surrounded with such «majesty, grace and splendor» that her Sisters never tired of looking at her (II, 298 /n, 229/). The general impression was that she did not seem to be «a human creature, but an angel come down from heaven» (II, 698 /III, 180/; *Process*, I, p. 381).

In the pleasant contemplation of God and His mysteries she appeared «happy, joyful and festive» (*Process*, I, p. 182), with «a laughter of paradise» on her lips. Sometimes she was so inflamed that she was constrained to manifest the violence «of the flame of divine love» that burned within her, by the sound of her voice and by her external gestures (*ib.*, p. 183).

On the other hand, when she contemplated sorrowful events, like the passion of Our Lord and the ingratitude of men, the pains of purgatory or of hell, she became «sad, afflicted and trembling,» and spoke «words of lament and compassion» (*ib.*, p. 183) and sometimes emitted cries and «moans that would have moved the stones to compassion» (II, 394 /II, 292/). In these ecstasies she perspired, she wept, she was anxious, she sighed, she relived the pains of Jesus interiorly and reproduced them exteriorly. Sometimes the sorrow that overwhelmed her was so intense and pressing that it locked her throat and she could hardly «release a word» (II, 386 /II, 287/). Then again she was often forced to speak, both on account of her excessive love and on account of her great sorrow (I, 25 /I, 25/; *Process*, I, p. 183), and spoke «what God made her understand» (*Process*, I, p. 297).

The astonishment of her Sisters increased when she embellished her speech with Latin phrases and even entire sentences, «inasmuch as she had never studied Latin.» Actually, she was able to read so little that the nuns «had to teach her; yet, while she was in ecstasy «it seemed that she knew grammar like a doctor» (II, 298 /I 229/). Often she spoke slowly and with pauses, sometimes in a low voice, at other times «with a sonorous and very strong voice, (even) though she had a naturally weak voice» (*Process*, I, p. 753); in the latter case she spoke with intensity of spirit and of word, especially if inflamed by some extraordinary excess of love.

Her speech also took on a particular tone and color in the conversations that she had with the Divine Persons, as well as in the violent and serried diatribes that she launched against the devils. Her words received an added dimension from the external attitudes she assumed during the ecstatic phenomena, with which therefore they are to be related. Generally, during the ecstasies, in which she spent hours and hours motionless, without even blinking an eye, «as if she were sleeping» (III, 206 /IV, 140/); II, 11 /II, 18/) – and this happened very often after Communion – she was wrapt in deepest silence. She seemed literally petrified in her absolute immobility; «it was not possible to move even her finger» (IV, 78 /IV, 232/; II, 11 /II, 18/). She could not move, even if she had been «burned, so much was she united with Love and abstracted from her senses» (I, 228 /I, 126/). On the other hand, when «drawn by her spirit» (II, 383 /II, 285/), that is, by «her vision» (II, 365 /II, 273/), she moved with surprising agility, grace and speed: «she seemed a wind» (IV, 704 /V, 233). It was difficult to keep up with her (II, 374, 383 /II, 279, 285/). She seemed not to touch the floor; she walked with the greatest assurance «through dangerous places, without any support or help... She went from one room to another; she went up and down stairs without stumbling or hitting anything» (Process, I, p. 184). With her hands joined and raised, she went from place to place with such agility and lightness «that she seemed to be a heavenly spirit» (ib., I, p. 418). Amazing gestures and movements, sometimes strange and impressive, accompanied the words of the ecstatic. She was particularly impressive when she relived the tragedy of Calvary; its vivid representation offers us scenes that are highly dramatic.

On the other hand, the visions, for the most part, did not have the spasmodic characteristics mentioned above, and often no external representations of note; in general, therefore, they did not hinder the saint from attending to her accustomed duties. In ecstasy, in fact, she awakened the Sisters at the first sign of dawn (IV, 704 /V, 233/); in ecstasy she sewed, she painted and performed «other exercises, all with outstanding skill and perfection, as if she were using natural light.» Rather, these activities were more completely and more precisely successful than those performed «outside of rapture.» During fatiguing activities she showed an enormous and extraordinary strength that would match even a robust man's (II, 768 /III, 222/).

The ecstasies in general, even though they might last for days and days and be interrupted only by the briefest intervals, did not affect her health (II, 241 /II, 187/). Thus, the amanuenses report that, after many hours of nocturnal rapture, «she went into the choir with the Sisters, and there she said Matins – which were in truth long, because several parts were sung – without any indication of sleepiness or fatigue at all. Rather, she rose up, she took her place kneeling and sitting according to what was called for, with such speed and agility that she seemed a bird» (II, 241 /II, 187/). Sometimes, however, especially after the representation of the passion, «she regained her senses after the raptures with her body very tired and weary.»

An attitude which the nuns regularly noted was that in which Mary Magdalen acted as if she were far away, outside of time and space. She herself noticed it: she says she is «in heaven» (IV, append., ecstasy of Sept. 24, 1600 /V, 291/); and in speaking of earthly

events she repeats several times: «down there in the world» (IV, 272, 670 /IV, 32; V, 219/; II, 235, 806 /II, 182; III, 240/) She did not hear or see anything on earth even if she kept her eyes open (I, 228 /I, 126-7/). When she wished to speak to some nun who was, in fact, very close to her she shouted in a loud voice, «as does a person /who is/ very far away» and she murmured to herself: «She is so far away that she does not hear me» (Process, I, p. 184). If the nun answered her, also in a loud voice, many times she did not hear anything, but «sometimes yes, according to how much more or less she was abstracted» (1. c, I. P. 228; II, 421 /III, 11/; IV, 548 /V, 167/). Yet she could not react to the external stimulus (I, 228 /I, 126/). On the other hand, when superiors called her, she always heard, and especially with they commanded under obedience, even if this was expressed in the most natural or subdued tone. And she always obeyed their requests.

This almost absolute suspension of her senses from their normal functions, a suspension caused by a soul profoundly absorbed and immersed in God, is quite understandable, since for the most part her visions were of an intellectual nature. This fact is constantly insinuated by the multiple expressions of the manuscript reports, according to which the saint «was rapt in an excess of mind» (I, 169 /I, 98-9/; II, 242 /II, 188/); she was rapt «in her usual way out of her senses» (II, 102 /II, 86/); when she saw Our Lady, «as usual with her, she saw with the eyes of her mind, and not with those of her body» (II, 20, 115 /II, 25, 95/); she returned «to her bodily senses» (II, 20, 110 /II, 24, 91/); she was terrorized for five long years by the «mental visions-of the devil (IV, 82 /TV, 234/); what she saw and heard in her mind (II, 348 II, 263/), she could not translate into earthly terms; etc.

Towards the end of the ecstasies a veil seemed to descend on her whole being; her soul returned «into time and to the earth,» her body appeared again as its normal self. Sometimes, nevertheless, a halo of grace and of light continued to surround her, like a twilight (II, 241 /II, 187/)— above all, after those raptures which absorbed her most; for then her ordinary appearance remained under the influence of the more vivid and stronger impressions received in ecstasy (II, 738 /III, 204). Normally, however, she recovered her usual humble and modest aspect, full of kindness and of humanity, just as if nothing had happened (II, 315 /II,241).

IV. WORKS. Beginning with the first ecstasies of 1584, the confessor of the monastery, «Father Sire Augustine Campi da Pontremoli,» ordered Mary Magdalen, as a novice, through the prioress, «to report, under obedience, all that happened to her during her life, and particularly during her raptures, and all that God gave her to understand.» She was to report all this to specified nuns who were charged to write it down; the purpose was to ascertain whether the ecstasies were a matter of illusions and diabolical deceits or of heavenly favors. The colloquies immediately proved to be of very poor quality, because Mary Magdalen could not remember the contents except in a very fragmentary and imperfect way (II, 235 /II, 132); more often than not she was unable to express what she had seen and what the Lord had given her to understand in the ecstasy. Then sometimes it was absolutely impossible to question her, because she remained «for some days... constantly... abstracted» (II, 466, 483 /III, 33, 45/).

On the other hand, the nuns did not wish such great treasures of doctrine and rare religious experience, «the jewels and the pearls that the Lord gives us... fall to the earth» (II, 255 /II, 197/). In accord with the confessor, they decided to write down whatever the saint was saying during the rapture itself and to note her more significant and expressive gestures and movements as well, for an easier understanding of the experience. Then, once the rapture was over, the saint read over what had been written «and if there were any errors, she corrected them, saying. 'I understood or said such a thing.' And she affirmed she had had those sensations and intuitions in the way in which they were written» (*Process*, I, p. 129; see also pp. 246 and 625).

The reports of the ecstasies fill five books, preserved in the archive of the monastery of St. Mary of the Angels in Florence. These five manuscript books, in good condition and easily legible, are entitled: Book of the Forty Days, Book of the Colloquies, Book of the Revelations and Intelligences; Book of the Probation, Book of the Renewal of the Church. The books correspond to various groupings of ecstasies; they follow a chronological order, almost in the form of a diary.

The first edition, which then remained the basis of all the others until our days, was prepared in 1611 by Puccini. Besides combining various ecstasies, he joined sentences, changed words and, what is worse, developed, sometimes quite amply, the thought of a few lines. Besides the five volumes mentioned and twenty-eight «family» letters, we possess a small work of Teachings and Counsels given «outside of ecstasy»; these were gathered together by her novices and are of a distinctly ascetical character. The manuscripts, of which we now possess a faithful and complete edition (Florence, 1960-6; in English, Fatima, 1969-75), have a certain literary value, but they are much more precious from a doctrinal point of view.

Mary Magdalen based her personal religious formation on Holy Scripture, with the absolute primacy reserved to the Gospels. She also relied on the *Soliloquies of St. Augustine*, the writings of St. Catherine of Siena, and the meditations on the passion of Jesus by the Jesuit Loarte. The influence of these works, together with Thomistic theology and, above all, the spirituality of St. Catherine, is eminently present in the manuscripts, which, even in their occasional and fragmentary character, contain a spiritual doctrine that is complex and of noteworthy interest.

V. DOCTRINE. Mary Magdalen's vision of the spiritual life is presented to us as on a two-fold level: one develops in eternity, the other in time. The first introduces us into the depths of the divinity, in which the explanation of the second is rooted. The latter presents us with the mystery of the Incarnate Word and the path of man towards heaven. The explanation is based on love, which animates and resolves every situation.

Essentially, God is love, the saint repeats innumerable times. Creation had its beginning as the terminus of excessive love and of exuberant fullness. Sin, freely committed, made the creature «incapable ... to receive God's gifts within himself» (III, 144 /TV, 101/). Man lost this capacity, but only partially; thus there was born in the Trinity «a

new counsel Of humility and love» (i.e.) to redeem man by means of the incarnation of the Word. A final «counsel of love» determined «to give sublime gifts and graces» to faithful creatures and «to each one according to his works» (III, 146 /IV, 102/). Mary Magdalen develops these themes unequally; by preference she lingers on the second plan dealing with the work of the redemption. Although, with other mystics, she repeatedly affirms that the Word would have become man even if man had not sinned (II, 691 /II, 175/; III, 59 /IV, 46/), in fact, however, she presents Him as clothed in our flesh in order to redeem us from sin. The only motive for His coming was His great love, which led Him even to the «foolishness»: Of the cross and made Him, as it were, «forget ... His wisdom» (III, 123 /IV, 87/). The Word has redeemed us through His humanity, «the tabernacle» of God (II, 95 /II, 80/), which was possessed by the Holy Spirit «just as His own» (II, 140 /II, 112/). Whoever does not pass through this sacred humanity cannot reach salvation: it is the «bridge» (II, 372 /II, 278/), the «stairway» (II, 328 /II, 249/), the «ship that leads to port» (II, 622 /III, 196/). The Word Made Man, placed like «an anvil» (IV, 620 /V, 196/) between God's anger and men's wickedness, is the perfect instrument of redemption (II, 249 /II, 193/) that began in sorrow and was consummated on the cross.

No theme returns so insistently in the doctrine of the saint as the bloody and interior (mental) passion of Jesus, the passion often symbolized by Christ's blood, towards which Mary Magdalen nourished a deep devotion. The «re-creation» of mankind by means of the blood of Christ lifts mankind to a level of life superior to that of original justice, even to the level of the angels (III, 281 /IV, 188/). The love of God for man, before and after the incarnation, «is as different ... as light ... from darkness» (II, 689 /III, 173/). The soul returns to such grandeur by faithfully recopying «the Book of Life», Jesus Himself (II, 859 /III, 273/). Its likeness to God is in proportion to its likeness to Christ (IV, 657 /V, 212-3/). Just as the piety and the doctrine of the saint are decisively Christocentric, so also are they decisively Marian. She affirms the Immaculate Conception of the «Virgin Mary», her unique holiness— «the most holy person who has ever existed, both at present and as she must be for the future» (IV, 476 /V, 133/—and her spiritual motherhood (II, 79 /III, 68/), her mediation of all graces (II, 59 /IV, 46/).

The return of man to God is conceived as a struggle between two loves: self-love and divine love (IV, 660-704 /V, 214-33/), which is born of humility. After charity, there is no virtue on which she insists more than humility. Pride is destruction and disunion between God and man, between man and man (II, 495 /III, 54/). (Her description of pride and of the other vices, v.g., II, 452 ff. /III, 24 ff/, is particularly effective on a psychological level.) Humility establishes the union; it is, as it were, the mother of love and the gateway to grace. Freedom—both the greatness and the downfall of mankind (in, 285 /IV, 191/)—when dominated by pride, can place an obstacle to this grace.

The return to the fatherland can be accomplished along one of two ways: one is broad, the other a narrow path. The laity take the first way, religious the second (II, 167/11, 132-3/). The saint describes religious life on numerous occasions, detailing its specific virtues, its practices (with great emphasis on ascetical renunciations, and practically nothing on prayer), its possible defects, etc. Her doctrine is more theoretical in the

Ecstasies, but exclusively practical in the Teachings; it offers nothing specific except the ardor and the great passion with which it is expressed. If the soul is led to God by means of the cardinal virtues (of which brief descriptions, Thomistic in tone, are given; see IV, 378 /V, 88/) it is, nevertheless, by exercising the theological virtues that it directly and intimately adheres to Him (IV, 270 /V, 31/). Wholly taken up with love, Mary Magdalen speaks little of faith, almost nothing of hope. Love, of which she gives us some classifications on the basis of its intensity and the effects that it produces (II, 438, 647 /III, 21, 146-7/; III, 177 /IV, 123/), is the keystone of the whole spiritual edifice. It guides every event of our divine-human history: «created by God ... for love and with love ... it is through this way» that we are to return to Him (IV, 336 /V, 67/), Love measures the progress of the soul on this way of return (III, 194 /IV, 133/).

It is significant that her rather poor doctrine on the sacraments is not so in regard to the Eucharist, the sacrament of love. True love of God demands love of neighbor: «one cannot exist without the other» (IV, 690 /V, 227/). The apostolic aspect of love, stressed with particular care, rendered Mary Magdalen sensitive, even in doctrinal matters, to the preoccupations of her times; very significant in this regard are the fifth manuscript on the reform of the Church, the repetition of dogmatic themes that were then being discussed (grace, free will, purgatory, etc.), and also her devotions (to the humanity of Christ, to her guardian angel, to the holy souls), which were typically Italian and counter-reformation. But the principal function of love is to unite the soul to God (II, 150, 310, etc. /II, 120, 237/).

Union with God is necessary for man in order that he be happy (II, 250, 468 /II, 194; III, 35/); it is also a need of divine love, which «cannot bear to see anything that is not equal to» itself (III, 127 /IV, 90/). This union demands radical purification, which assimilates and makes free, by means of the practice of the virtues – above all, of humility-love, which leads to annihilation. The soul must «will nothing, be able to do nothing, ... hear nothing and comprehend everything» (II, 331 /II, 251/). The intervention of God, asked for in humility and proportioned to love, is painful, because it purifies and enlightens: the soul must receive it with humility and abandonment (IV, 455 /V, 123/; II, 886 /III, 291/). The apparent renunciation of activity, which is alluded to in the manuscripts and which so pleased several quietists of the 1600's, is not static apathy, but the simple psychological impression of the subject: «continuing to work,» according to Mary Magdalen, «is to leave ourselves completely dead in God, to such an extent that God works in the soul and the soul in God; and thus the soul, while working, in a way does not perceive that it is working» (III, 169 /IV, 117/). In order to reach transformation, in which all is peace in the depths of the soul, despite possible struggles on the surface, and in which one has a particular knowledge of God caused by love, one must transcend every created form, even the very humanity of Jesus (II, 845 : /III, 264/). The transformed soul lives the life of God and it can no longer be separated from Him (II, 728 /III, 198/); it is most precious for the Church (II, 79, etc. /II, 68/); it will not pass through the flames of purgatory (II, 246 /II, 191/); its death will be one of love (II, 522 /III, 71/). For Mary Magdalen, therefore, the spiritual life is like a circle, enlivened with love, that has God both as its starting and as its finishing point.

The doctrinal influence exercised by Mary Magdalen on the spirituality and piety, especially Italian, of the XVII and XVIII centuries was noteworthy. There were numerous editions of her Ecstasies during these two centuries, and the bibliographical listings of Mary Magdalen reached almost three hundred. The most famous representative of this influence is perhaps St. Alphonsus, who uses the doctrine of the Florentine Carmelite in some of his ascetical works. In the XIX cent., a crisis loomed, but it seems that this is being gradually resolved in our own days.

VI. CULT. Veneration for the saint began in Florence, practically at once after her death. In the second decade of the XVII cent, it spread throughout Italy, particularly in Lucca and Parma, where two informative processes in regard to some miracles were held in 1612. These processes, together with the main process, begun at Florence in 1611, in which a hundred and eight witnesses were examined, were sent to Rome to the S. Congregation of Rites on Feb. 22, 1613 (see *Secret Vatican Archive*, sect. S. Congregation of Rites, *Process 767*). With the beatification (June 8, 1626), centers of cult began to spring up; besides those at Florence, Lucca and Parma, there were others in Venice, Bergamo and, above all, in Naples and Rome. With the canonization (April 28, 1669), her cult was rapidly extended to the whole peninsula, particularly to Milan, Bologna, Turin, Verona, Cremona, Brescia, Forli, Massa and Genoa. For a satisfying documentation on these centers, see E. Ancilli, *S. Maria Maddalena de'Pazzi: Dottrina, Estasi, Influsso*, the entire third part.

From Italy, devotion to the saint spread immediately after her beatification and canonization to France, Spain (Madrid and Saragossa), Portugal (Lisbon), and especially Flanders, where, during the second half of the XVII century, active centers of devotion could be counted at Ghent, Brugge, Bruxelles, and particularly at Anvers. There were also centers in Germany and Poland. In general, the propagation of this devotion followed the presence and development of the Carmelite Order; and the Carmelites were, as is obvious, its most enthusiastic propagators.

In the XVIII cent, devotion to the saint continued with the same intensity in Italy, while it weakened in Spain and almost completely disappeared in France. During this century the pious practice of the «five Fridays in honor of St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, in memory of the five principal favors that she received from God» was propagated. Proposed for the first time in 1670 by John Anthony Solazzi, this practice was regarded in the beginning with a certain amount of suspicion, due to the heterodoxy of its author, who was accused of semi-quietism. Taken up again by Segneri, it was widely diffused throughout the XVIII and XIX centuries in Italy and also in Spain.

In 1758, at Bologna, a «Congregation of St. Mary Magdalen de'Pazzi» was organized; however, its influence was merely local. At the end of this same century a Little Office of St. Mary Magdalen de'Pazzi was approved; it was printed at Florence in 1796. After the crisis of the first half of the XIX cent. (when, nevertheless, we find a great devotee in St. Joseph Benedict Cotto-lengo, who propagated the spirit of prayer and of sacrifice of St. Mary Magdalen in his own Congregation), there was, at the end of the XIX cent., a renewal of devotion that went on extending itself slowly but constantly, even outside of

Europe. Suffice it to recall that the first national church constructed for Italians in the United States, at Philadelphia in 1857, was dedicated by the Bl. John Nepomucene Neumann to St. Mary Magdalen de'Pazzi. The feast of the saint is ascribed to May 25 as an optional memorial for the universal Church, as an obligatory memorial for the Discalced Carmelites, and as a feast for the ancient observance of the Order.

VII. ICONOGRAPHY. A first portrait, the work of Santi di Tito, pictures the saint as a girl of seventeen, a short while before her clothing as a nun. It was done at the request of her father: «As he found himself deprived of her presence, he sought to have her, because of the great love that he had for her, in the way that was possible to him: and this he did by having her painted...» (*Breve Ragguaglio /Brief Report/,* pp. 33 ff.).

Immediately after her death many portraits of the saint were executed by various Florentine painters, as Francis Curradi attests in the process of beatification: «As a painter, I have done about eighty portraits of the said Sister Mary Magdalen after her death, at the request of various persons... These persons have sent them to various cities of Tuscany and beyond; to Lucca, to Bologna, to Mantua, to Perugia. At present I am painting and I have two at hand. They are to go to Anvers, both commissioned by two English gentlemen... and I have in hand another which is to go to Naples. I know also that many other painters in Florence have done some... such as Nicodemus Ferruzzi, one of the Casinis and other painters» (pp. 1406, 1410).

In the archive of the monastery of the saint are preserved eighty-nine worthwhile designs, finished in Florence on Oct. 4. 1610: «In ordering and placing the designs the chronological order was followed; under the designs, a few verses provided a condensed explanation of the mysteries which were represented.» A copy of these was also made in colors. The author is perhaps the above-mentioned F. Curradi. Father Puccini, as he affirmed in the remissorial process (pp. 85, 265), on his own initiative had «the same life and miracles» printed «in pictures, with copper plates, in folio.» On the occasion of the canonization another life, *iconibus expressa /expressed in pictures/,* was printed under the auspices of the convent and of the monastery of Boxmeer. These are forty-nine pictures, of little artistic value, which follow the life of the saint in chronological order and below provide explanations in Latin, French and Flemish. In the year 1670 there was another iconographic life, printed at Anvers and consisting of fifty plates (21 by 28. 5 cm.), which was reprinted in 1896, under the auspices of the Carmelite nuns of Saint-Omer.

The museum of Ghent preserves a painting of T. Boeyermans which represents the mystical exchange of the heart of Mary Magdalen with that of Christ. In the church dedicated to the saint in Florence (seriously damaged by the flood of Nov. 4, 1966) two works of L. Giordano (1632-1705) are deserving of special attention: The vision of the glory of St. Aloysius Gonzaga and The Virgin in the act of giving Jesus to Mary Magdalen; plus one of C. Ferri and P. F. Silvani: Apparition of Christ to Mary Magdalen.

In the church of St. Andrew at Lille a picture of J. van Oost represents the saint assumed into heaven. She is represented in ecstasy among other saints by W. Damery in

the church of the Carmelite nuns of Paris, and by A. Franchi in the major seminary at Florence.

In the Carmelite basilica of Florence there is a picture by Fabbrini in which the Virgin enfolds the saint with the veil of purity. This mystical grace has also been evoked by L. Gerniniani in the church of St. Mary in Montesanto at Rome (see the picture, by the same artist, Mary Magdalen frees a possessed woman, preserved in the Pallavicini gallery, also in Rome); by Philip Palazzetti in the church of St. Mary of the Virgins at Macerata (1736); and recently in a valuable mosaic in the crypt of the international college of the Discalced Carmelites at Rome, the work of A. Pasquini. Finally, the entire life of the saint has been portrayed in pictures by Mina Anselmi in a collection of seventy-five sketches in ink and stain, exhibited at Florence and published in 1960 in the volume *S. Maria Maddalena de'Pazzi* /in English, under the title, *Portrait of a Seraph, Fatima*, pp. 165/.

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