

sical or absolute (as was the impeccability of Christ) (28). Consequently, she could possess the virtue of Penance, even though it could never produce its connatural act.

CONCLUSION

It is good for Catholics to meditate on the great holiness of the Mother of God, particularly in the course of this year, dedicated by Pope Pius XII in a special way to Mary. For the thought of Mary's immeasurable sanctity emphasizes the immeasurable love of God for her who was destined to fulfil the function of maternity for the Word Incarnate. Even one who would not admit the opinion that Mary's measure of sanctity in the first moment of her existence surpassed that of all angels and saints combined or the opinion that she possessed the use of reason in that first moment, so that she could co-operate with the influx of divine grace that preserved her from the stain of original sin, must admit, in virtue of the Church's tradition, that from the very beginning of her existence the Mother of God was endowed with a measure of grace that surpassed that of every individual angel or saint. This, of itself, would suffice to justify the veneration which the Catholic Church pays to Mary, as one whom the Almighty Himself chose to be the recipient of His most precious graces, as one who was truly «full of grace».

ALFRED RUSH

OUTLINES OF MARY'S HOLINESS IN NEW TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

The purpose of this paper is to furnish in outline form the theme of the holiness of Mary in the New Testament Apocrypha. The present paper will serve as an introduction to a later study which will treat this theme in full detail.

The source of our investigation will be the New Testament Apocrypha. Besides the canonical New Testament, there grew up a type of literature known as the Apocryphal New Testament writings. These writings strive to supply data regarding Christ, Mary, the Apostles and the future life. Thus there developed such writings as apocryphal Gospels, Epistles, Acts and Apocalypses. In supplying for the silence of the canonical writings on these various points, the writers give free sway to their imaginations, write in a fantastic manner, and surcharge their accounts with home made miracles. To gain readers and to bolster up their accounts, the writers pose as Apostles or as people closely associated with the Apostles. Aside from the fact that these writings are not inspired, it has been said that these works, by their

(28) ROSCHINI, *o.c.* 378ff.

bizarre style, have not been excluded, but have excluded themselves from the New Testament (1). Stylistically, there is no comparison between the majesty and simplicity of the canonical writings and the extravagance and bombast of the apocryphal writings. Furthermore, these writings were often used by heretics, especially the Gnostics, as mouthpieces for their propaganda (2).

Despite these strictures, these writings are of tremendous importance. They furnish an insight into the early Christian mentality. They are witnesses to Christian beliefs and practices. Hence, they are a great help for the theologians and the history of dogma. If this is true for theology in general, it is particularly true of Mariology. These works are written by defenders of Mary's privileges and champions of Mary's greatness. In the field of Mariology, the authors for the most part are orthodox, and even if a work has its origin from a church in Schism, e.g. Egypt, it must be borne in mind that these people vied with the orthodox world in proclaiming the greatness of the Mother of God (3).

In this apocryphal literature, there are two main Marian sources. The first, from about the middle of the second century, is the *Protoevangelium* of James. Closely allied with this are the Syriac, Ethiopic, Armenian and Latin translations or elaborations, the various Infancy Gospels, the History of Joseph the Carpenter, and the Coptic Lives of the Virgin (4). The second source, from the end of the fifth century, is the literature known as the *Transitus Mariae*. Included in this are the various versions in Syriac, Coptic, Greek, Latin, etc. (5).

In this literature there is a whole corpus of Mariology, comprising testimonies to Mary's virginity, maternity, assumption, queenship and intercession (6). Obviously, all these aspects of Mariology are testimonies to her holiness. Nevertheless, there are sufficient testimonies in this literature to Mary's holiness to warrant the writing of a special treatise on this aspect of Mariology. A preliminary word of caution is called for. Modern treatises of Mariology have their logical and schematic divisions regarding Mary's sanctity. In this literature, as is to be expected, there is no such orderly codification. To these authors, Mary is the holy Virgin, the all holy Mother of God. She is simply holy. Incidentally, the phrase, «the holy Virgin», is an appellation containing an idea of sanctity which does not begin only with the day of the Annunciation, an appellation which obviously comprises more than mere

(1) M. JAMES, *The apocryphal New Testament*, Oxford 1926, XII.

(2) Cfr J. QUASTEN, *Patrology* I, Westminster Md. 1950, 106-157; E. AMANN, *Apocryphes du nouveau testament: Dictionnaire de la Bible - Supplement* I, Paris 1928, 460-533.

(3) On the value of the Apocrypha cfr JAMES, o.c. XII f. and M. JUGIE AA., *La mort et l'assomption de la sainte Vierge* (= *Studi e Testi* CXIV), Città del Vaticano 1944, 167ff.

(4) E. AMANN, *Le protoévangile de Jacques et ses remaniements latins*, Paris 1910; QUASTEN, o.c. 118-125.

(5) C. BALXÉ OFM., *Testimonia de assumptione B.V. Mariae ex omnibus saeculis* I (= *Bibliotheca assumptionis B.V.M.* I), Romae 1948, 14-65; 137-153. - JUGIE, o.c. 103-171. - A. RUSH CSSR., *Assumption theology in the Transitus Mariae: American Ecclesiastical Review* 123(1950) 93-110.

(6) A study on Mary in the Apocrypha of the New Testament, written by the present writer, will appear in the first volume of *Mary*, which is being edited by the Rev. J. CAROL OFM.

virginity or physical integrity (7). These simple statements of holiness are the basis for many other assertions regarding the sanctity of Mary.

The principal aim of the author of the *Protoevangelium* was to defend the virginity of Mary against current attacks. Voicing traditional teaching he shows that Mary was a virgin ante partum, in partu, and post partum (8). In defending Mary's virginity, however, he ascribes to Mary what might be described as a legal or physical purity and holiness. She is considered above all as a physical agent of the Incarnation. Her role is that of furnishing a body for the Incarnate Word, and since this body had to be without defilement, there was attributed to Mary a purity that is above all exterior. Little account is taken of moral dispositions; no stress is laid on the voluntary intervention of Mary in all this work. Thus, she could not be defiled by stepping on the ground. Instead of offering herself to God, she was rather offered to Him; instead of vowing herself to God, she was vowed to Him (9). There is, however, a phrase in the *Protoevangelium* of James that shows how the quality of holiness is linked to the person of Mary. When Anna thanked God for working a miracle by giving offspring to her and Joachim, who were advanced in age and sterile, she exclaimed: «And the Lord has given me a fruit of His justice» (10). Commenting on this, M. Jugie remarks: «This fruit of justice which the Lord gave her, does it not designate Mary?» Mary is called a fruit of justice, that is, a fruit of holiness, worthy of Him who gave it (11). Mary, the fruit of holiness given to Joachim and Anna, is one who, in the words of the angel, will be spoken of in the entire world (12).

Eloquent as is the defense of Mary's perfect virginity in the *Protoevangelium* of James, the author emphasizes a holiness in Mary that is material, legal, physical and exterior. Consequently, in other elaborations of the *Protoevangelium*, while the virginity of Mary is defended, there is great stress laid on Mary's voluntary cooperation in the work of holiness. This is particularly strong in the sixth century Latin work of Pseudo-Matthew, entitled: *Liber de ortu beatae Mariae et infantia Salvatoris*. In this, Mary of her own free will and as a means of being dear to God, vows herself to God by perpetual virginity (13). Furthermore, describing Mary's life in the temple, the author pictures her as a model of prayer and industry. She surpassed all in prayer, wisdom, charity, humility and all virtues (14). This change of emphasis is easy to understand. It reflects the *praedicatio catholica* which proclai-

(7) X. LE BACHELET SI., *Immaculée Conception : Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* VII 1, Paris 1927, 875.

(8) AMANN, *Le protoévangile* 22-49. Regarding the attacks on Mary's virginity, cfr ORIGINES, *Contra Celsum* I 32.

(9) AMANN, *o.c.* 23-29.

(10) *Protoevangelium Jacobi* VI 3 (AMANN, *o.c.* 202). The text is also found in C. TISCHENDORF, *Evangelia apocrypha*, Leipzig 1876, 1-50 and C. MICHEL, *Evangelies apocryphes (= Textes et documents XII)*, Paris 1911, 2-50.

(11) M. JUGIE AA., *Le protoévangile de Jacques et l'Immaculée Conception : Echos d'Orient* 14(1911) 20.

(12) *Protoevangelium Jacobi* IV 1 (AMANN, *o.c.* 192).

(13) PS.-MATTHAEUS, *Liber de ortu Mariae et infantia Salvatoris* VII (AMANN, *o.c.* 300-304). The text is also found in TISCHENDORF, *o.c.* 51-112 and MICHEL, *o.c.* 54-158.

(14) PS.-MATTHAEUS, *Liber de ortu Mariae* VI (AMANN, *o.c.* 296-300).

med Mary as the model of Christian asceticism; the originator and protector of consecrated virginity (15).

Describing Mary's life in the temple, Pseudo-Matthew pictures Mary as living in a convent of virgins, conceived after the manner of Christian convents. In the Coptic Lives of the Virgin and the sermon of Theodosius of Alexandria on the Assumption, Mary is portrayed as the Superioress of a group of virgins with whom she lived after the Ascension of Christ into Heaven, and whom she trained in the ways of purity and holiness (16). This convent theme is of paramount importance for understanding the holiness ascribed to Mary in the Apocrypha. The Christian ascetic was regarded as the acme of Christian spirituality. What the martyr was in the era of persecution, that the monk was in the succeeding era of peace. The ascetic was the perfect imitator of Christ, the brother to the martyr; such a life was a spiritual martyrdom, in fact a daily martyrdom. Such a life was a white martyrdom in contrast to red martyrdom (17): Such a portrayal of Mary, therefore, is an indication that to these authors Mary was a model of holiness and a paragon of Christian perfection. In a word, the holiness of Mary in this first source from the apocryphal New Testament is summed up in the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy which proclaims that Mary the Mother of God has no equal (18).

To proclaim the glories of the Mother of God is also to proclaim the holiness of Mary. This explains why there is such a pronounced emphasis on this theme in the literature known as the *Transitus Mariae* which deals with the death and glorification of Mary. Holiness is constantly ascribed to Mary. Whether these documents refer to her as Mary, Virgin, Mother, Queen, the word holy is always used. She is holy Mary, the holy virgin, the holy Mother of God and the holy Queen.

Some idea of the exaltedness and holiness of Mary is gained from these words of the complete Syriac version which is often referred to as the work of Pseudo-James: «For she was a vine of rejoicing, she who was chosen by God before all created things, and God sent His Son, and He was born of her without the intercourse of man... She also the Lady Mary was holy and elect of God before she was born... She is the holy woman, whose commemoration it befits us to make, is the most blessed among women» (19).

The Latin account of Pseudo-Melito brings out the holiness of the Virgin Mother of Christ by noting that she was forechosen by Christ to be His immaculate dwelling place (20). She who was chosen to be Christ's immaculate

(15) AMANN, o.c. 28; E. DUBLANCHY, *Marie. Le voeu de virginité émis par Marie: Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* IX 2, Paris 1927, 2386. PIUS XII, *Sacra virginitas: Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 36(1954) 187-189.

(16) *Sahidic fragments of the Life of the Virgin* IV 23, ed. J. ROBINSON, *Coptic apocryphal Gospels* (= *Texts and Studies* IV 2), Cambridge 1896, 29; THEODOSIUS ALEXANDRINUS, *The Falling Asleep of Mary* II 1 (ROBINSON, o.c. 93).

(17) E. MALONE OSB., *The Monk and the Martyr* (= *The Catholic University of America, Studies in Christian Antiquity* XII), Washington 1950.

(18) *Evangelium infantiae Salvatoris arabicum* III (TISCHENDORF, o.c. 182).

(19) PS.-JACOBUS, *Transitus Mariae* I, ed. A. LEWIS, *Apocrypha syriaca* (= *Studia sinaitica* XI), London 1902, 15.

(20) PS.-MELITO, *Transitus Mariae* XV 3, ed. C. TISCHENDORF, *Apocalypses apocryphae...*, Lipsiae 1866, 134.

dwelling lived a life of personal holiness by loving God with her whole heart and by keeping the treasure that was committed to her. Such was her holiness in life that when her soul left the body it shone with such a whiteness that no tongue of man can describe. Its whiteness was greater than that of snow, and its resplendent brilliance was greater than the sparkling of all metals and silver (21).

Pseudo-John, the author of the Greek version of the *Transitus Mariae*, can describe the holiness of Mary only by having recourse to the use of the superlative. To him, Mary is all holy. She is *παναγία*. This holiness of Mary is especially linked up with her role as Virgin-Mother. In his words she is «the all-holy glorious Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary» (22). Giving further precision to his thoughts, Pseudo-John speaks of Mary as the holy and spotless Mother of God and Virgin (23).

Being a creature of holiness, Mary is holy in body and soul. The body of Mary, as the instrument of her virginity, divine maternity, and the practice of virtue and sanctity, is sacred and venerable. It is because of this that he asserts that the sacred and venerable body of Mary will not see corruption (24). If the body is sacred and venerable, all the more so is the soul. The soul of the Virgin Mother of God, the soul of one who is all-holy and spotless is, after this life, ready for the Beatific Vision. Describing Mary's death, Pseudo-John writes: «And the Lord spread forth His unstained hands and received her holy and spotless soul» (25). Holiness in the life of grace is the prelude to beatitude in the life of glory. The unique holiness of Mary in body and soul was the preparation for her exceptional glorification in body and soul. Pseudo-John brings this out when he pictures Christ as saying to Mary: «Behold, henceforth shall thy precious body be translated unto paradise; and thy holy soul shall be in the heavens, in the treasures of My Father in unsurpassing brightness» (26).

One of the most celebrated Coptic accounts of the *Transitus* is that written by Theodosius, the Jacobite patriarch of Alexandria, 535-566 (27). When speaking of Mary in her various functions as Virgin and Mother, he always speaks of her as holy. She is the «holy Godbearer Mary»; the «holy Virgin Mary», and «Mary the holy Virgin» (28). Theodosius brings out that Mary's holiness is seen in carrying out the Lord's commandment of charity. He pictures Mary as addressing the Lord and referring to Him, in the words of the Canticle of Canticles, as Him whom my soul loves (29). The holiness of Mary, rooted in the love of God, is also manifested in the performance

(21) PS.-MELITO, *Transitus Mariae* VII (TISCHENDORF, *o.c.* 129).

(22) PS.-IOANNES, *Liber de dormitione Mariae* I (TISCHENDORF, *o.c.* 95).

(23) PS.-IOANNES, *o.c.* 26 (*ed. cit.* 103).

(24) PS.-IOANNES, *o.c.* 10 (*ed. cit.* 98).

(25) PS.-IOANNES, *o.c.* 44 (*ed. cit.* 109).

(26) PS.-IOANNES, *o.c.* 39 (*ed. cit.* 108).

(27) E. AMANN, *Théodose d'Alexandrie : Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* XIV 1, Paris 1946, 325-328.

(28) THEODOSIUS ALEXANDRINUS, *The Falling Asleep of Mary* Prologus III 3, III 8; ed. J. ROBINSON, *Coptic apocryphal Gospels (= Texts and Studies* IV 2), Cambridge 1896, 92, 99.

(29) THEODOSIUS ALEXANDRINUS, *o.c.* III 9, 30; VI 31 (*ed. cit.* 101, 103, 107, 117).

of good works. When Christ presented the soul of Mary to the Heavenly Father, He speaks of His Mother as one who is adorned with good deeds (30).

In the sermon of Theodosius the most glowing testimonies to Mary's holiness are found in his description of Mary's glorification. This is not surprising since holiness on earth is the basis of and prelude to glorification in heaven. Theodosius has two accounts of Mary's glorification. The first deals with the entrance of the soul of Mary into heavenly glory; the second deals with the raising up of the body of Mary and her heavenly glorification in both soul and body (31).

When Christ had called Mary in death, He presented her to the court of heaven and said: «O my good Father, receive from Me the soul of My blessed Mother, who received Thine only begotten Son in the world. Receive from Me Thy holy temple, which was a dwelling place of Thy Holy Spirit, even the unity of the Godhead... I offer Thee, O My Father, a royal gift today, even the soul of My Virgin Mother. I bring in unto Thee today, O My good Father, her who is better than the ark of old; for Thou didst save the whole world by My being in her, Thy coessential Son. Today is a day of joy to Me, O My Father, the Almighty; for My Mother comes to Thee, arrayed and adorned with good deeds. The angels rejoice with Me today, O My good Father, as they see Me rejoicing with My Virgin Mother, who comes to them arrayed in heavenly garments. The arch-angels sing Our praise today, O My good Father; singing the befitting song, Glory to God in the highest, and peace at the coming unto us of the Mother of our Lord. The Cherubim and the Seraphim give their doxology of praise for this day; saying, Holy, Holy, Holy art Thou, Lord, Sabbath; holy in Thy temple, Thy cherubic throne. Who shall see Me today rejoicing; O My good Father, and not rejoice with me? For this is at once My temple and My Throne» (32).

In the Assumption scene, Theodosius portrays Christ as addressing the body of Mary, commanding it to rise from the dead. Then he speaks of Mary personally, glorified in body and soul. Mary's holiness in body and soul is seen in these words placed on the lips of Christ: «Arise from thy sleep, O thou holy body which was to Me a Temple: wear thy soul, which was to me a true tent. Arise, O thou body, that dies according to its nature: wear thy deathless soul, that thou mayest be altogether deathless, and that I may take thee to the land of the living... Arise. Why sleepest thou yet in the earth? Array thyself with thy soul and come to the heavens with Me, unto My good Father and the Holy Spirit; for they long for thee... Arise, O thou holy body: be joined to the blessed soul. Receive from Me thy resurrection before the whole creation: The inhabitants of heaven will be amazed, when they see thee arrayed with thy soul, even with immortality. They will say one to another; Who is this that hath received his resurrection before the whole creation? Peradventure this is the house of the Lord, this is the Gate of heaven. Let us sing praise to our God herein, for the Lord loves it more than all the dwellings of Jacob; which is the choir of the saints» (33).

In the foregoing lines, Theodosius brings out that Mary in her holiness

(30) THEODOSIUS ALEXANDRINUS, *o.c.* VI 26 (*ed.cit.* 115). Cfr also IX 15.

(31) Cfr BALIC, *Testimonia de assumptione* 44.

(32) THEODOSIUS ALEXANDRINUS, *o.c.* VI 14-26 (*ed.cit.* 113-115).

(33) THEODOSIUS ALEXANDRINUS, *o.c.* VIII 10-20 (*ed.cit.* 121, 123).

and glory is greater than the choir of the saints. This idea is brought out with even greater emphasis and precision in the Coptic account of Pseudo-Evodus (34). In his eulogy on Mary, the holy Virgin, whose holy virgin womb was made worthy to become a dwelling place of the Word of the Father, he exclaims: «What is the honor wherewith I shall honor thee, O thou holy Virgin, O thou that shinest more than the sun and art better than the moon, O thou that art higher than the angels who have no body. O thou that art more beautiful than the Cherubim and the Seraphim and the Thrones and the Dominations? Verily, thou art more honorable than all the ranks of the heavens, O Mary thou Virgin» (35). These words at once recall to mind the glowing tributes to Mary's holiness that will characterize Byzantine homiletical literature and which are exemplified in these words of St. Germanus which are now used in the office for the feast of the Immaculate Conception: «Ave, Maria, gratia plena, Sanctis sanctior, et caelis excelsior, et Cherubim gloriosior, et Seraphim honorabilior, et super omnem creaturam venerabilior» (36).

As is evident, there are abundant testimonies to Mary's holiness in this literature. These documents are not treatises on Mary's holiness but works which defend her virginity and proclaim the glories of the divine maternity. Nevertheless, in doing this the writers cannot speak of Mary without eulogizing her for her holiness. To these authors Mary is a creature of unique holiness. They cannot find words to describe this adequately. To them, Mary is holy and spotless; she was holy before she was born. This holiness excludes sin; sinlessness is a characteristic of the Mother of God. In these documents there is no explicit statement of the Immaculate Conception. Nevertheless, one feels that the writers are groping to find words that will utterly exclude all sin from one so honored by God. The praises of Mary in this literature are similar to those in the writings of the Fathers who hand down a doctrine unanimously received in the Church and of which Pope Pius XII writes: «If these praises of the Blessed Virgin Mary be given the careful consideration they deserve, who will dare to doubt that she, who was purer than the angels and at all times pure, was at any moment even for the briefest instant, not free from any stain of sin?» (37).

This literature emphasizes a double aspect of Mary's holiness. There is the voluntary element, that is, Mary's voluntary cooperation in virginity, the divine maternity, loving God with her whole heart, and performing good works. There is also the functional element. In other words, Mary's function, e.g. her divine maternity, was of itself a grace contributing to her complete holiness. Also worthy of note is the insistence on the fact that the beauty of Mary's holiness surpasses the beauty of all created things. Finally, in these documents there are statements which form the basis for the later developed speculative principle which asserts that the final holiness of Mary surpasses that of all the angels and saints.

(34) Cfr BALIĆ, *Testimonia de assumptione* 40.

(35) PS.-EVODIUS, *The Falling Asleep of Mary* III 1, IV 1, ed. J. ROBINSON, *Coptic apocryphal Gospels (= Texts and Studies IV 2)*, Cambridge 1896, 46-47.

(36) GERMANUS, *In praesentationem SS. Dei-parae* I 18 (PG 98, 307).

(37) PIUS XII, *Fulgens Corona: Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 45(1953) 579-580.