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THE DOCTRINE OF MARY'S DEATH DURING THE SCHOLASTIC PERIOD

THE object of this paper is aptly suggested by the keyword in the title—"doctrine." There is nothing that the writers of this period can be expected to add to the historical evidence for or against the death of Our Lady. Whether for what they may have considered historical reasons, or for the various doctrinal arguments they employ, there is a unanimity on the subject—Mary did die. Our aim is to present, as clearly as we can, an account of these doctrinal arguments, with suggestions of possible points for subsequent discussion as to their validity.

I. THE EARLY SCHOLASTIC PERIOD (VIII-XII Centuries)

Two works are of capital importance during this period. Both circulated under the patronage of two great Doctors of the Church, St. Jerome and St. Augustine. They are contrary to each other on the important matter of Our Lady's Assumption; they agree on her death, although their witness is of unequal value, as we shall see.

Before considering these pseudoepigraphical works, there is an earlier text that is of interest, especially since it has received diverse interpretations from the partisans¹ and adversaries² of Mary's immortality.

Some time in the eighth century, Ascaricus, an Asturian bishop, wrote to a Tusaredus concerning a situation that had come to his attention. It seems that there were some persons who denied that the resurrected witnesses to the death of Our Lord remained in that state. They returned to their graves, are still there, in fact. Moreover, the Virgin Mother of God

¹ Martin Jugie, A.A., *La mort et l'assomption de la S. Vierge; étude historico-doctrinale* (Vatican City, 1944) 274-275.

² Bahé, O.F.M., *Testimonia de assumptione B.V. Mariae ex omnibus saeculis*, 1 (Rome, 1948) 178-180.

shared the same fate and her body lies in the tomb and has been seen by many.³

In reply, Tusaredus launches into a lengthy introduction, which ends with a list of eleven points to be discussed. The eleventh point reads: "De gloriosa Maria quod nulla storia eam doceat passione aut quolibet morte multari."⁴ The author does not argue this point on his own, but is satisfied to rely on the authority of St. Isidore. Now St. Isidore is arguing against the opinion of those who held that the Blessed Virgin died a martyr's death in fulfillment of the prophecy of Simeon. To refute this, Isidore states: "Specialiter tamen nulla docet historia Mariam gladii animadversione peremptam, quia nec obitus eius uspiam legitur."⁵

Father Jugie claims Tusaredus as an advocate of Mary's immortality.⁶ But I think we must agree with Father Bahé who sees the "aut quolibet morte multari" as a mere paraphrase of Isidore's "nec obitus eius uspiam legitur."⁷ Jugie interprets the statement of Tusaredus absolutely, when in fact it depends on "nulla historia . . . doceat."

We must now turn our attention to the two pseudoepigraphical works of the ninth century which play an important role in the problem of Mary's death and assumption. They circulated under the patronage of St. Jerome and St. Augustine, and while they agree on the fact of Mary's death, they are, as we have said, of unequal merit.

³ Ascaricus, *Epistola ad Tusaredum*; PL 99, 1231-1234

⁴ Tusaredus, *Epistola ad Ascaricum*, PL 99, 1235, 1240

⁵ S. Isidore of Seville, *Deo ortu et habitu patrum*; PL 83, 149

⁶ Jugie, *op cit*, 275 "Tout indique que Tusarède a cru à l'immortalité glorieuse de la Vierge et qu'il a interprété dans ce sens la notice de saint Isidore." And in n 3 "Pour lui, Marie n'est morte d'aucune mort, et il est évident que, dans sa pensée, elle partage le sort des ressuscités du jour de Pâques."

⁷ Bahé, *op cit*, 180 "Tum ex dictis ipsius Tusaredi tum ex collatione testimonii eius cum verbis Isidori, patet illum prorsus ab isto dependere nec aliquid novi de exitu Matris Domini ex hoc mundo isti addere voluisse. Etenim verba Tusaredi 'aut quolibet morte multari,' idem dicunt ac illa Isidori 'nec obitus eius uspiam legitur'."

Pseudo-Jerome purports to be a letter addressed to Paula and Eustochius.⁸ It is generally agreed that it is the work of Paschasius Radbertus.⁹ The motivation of the author is clear enough; he wishes to discredit the apochryphal accounts that are circulating throughout the Church. He does not deny the Assumption; he is questioning the certitude of it.¹⁰ He does admit that the only point one can be certain of is that "hodierna die gloriosa migravit a corpore."¹¹

Pseudo-Augustine is a completely different kind of work; it is rightly acknowledged to be the first truly theological treatment¹² of the Assumption of Our Lady and it is equally valuable on the question of her death. The *De Assumptione beatae Mariae Virginis* is generally attributed to Ratramnus, a very independent disciple of Radbertus.¹³

Pseudo-Augustine undertakes to consider questions "de

⁸ Pseudo-Hieronymus, *Epistola 9, ad Paulum et Eustochium*, PL 30, 123

⁹ T. A. Agius, *On Pseudo-Jerome, epistle IX*, in *JTS*, 24 (1923) 176-183

¹⁰ "Quod [sc. anticipatam resurrectionem corpoream], quia Deo nihil est impossibile, nec nos de beata Maria virgine factum abnumus, quamquam propter cautelam (salva fide) pio magis desiderio opinari oporteat quam inconsulte definire quod sine periculo nescitur" PL 30, 127-128

¹¹ Pseudo-Hieronymus, *op. cit.*, 123. Before turning to a consideration of Pseudo-Augustine, we should note that there is another sermon *In festo assumptionis beatae Mariae sermo*, which also passed under the patronage of St. Augustine (PL 39, 2130). This author is even less willing to admit the Assumption of Mary "Restat ergo ut homo mendaciter non fingat apertum quod Deus voluit manere occultum. Vera autem de eius assumptione sententia haec esse probatur, ut secundum Apostolum, sive in corpore, sive extra corpus ignorantes (2 Cor 12 2) assumptam super angelos credamus" *Ibid.*

¹² Jugie, *op. cit.*, 285. "Il réagit heureusement contre l'agnosticisme de ses contemporains touchant le sort final de la Mère de Dieu et, sans faire le moindre fond sur des récits apocryphes, il aborde son sujet avec un sens théologique très affiné"

¹³ Pseudo-Augustinus, *De assumptione beatae Mariae virginis*, PL 40, 1141-1148. Balic points out that, whoever the author, the work is directed against the sceptics "denique eo quod eodem tempore et, ut videtur, in eadem regione ac illa opuscula alterius pseudo-Augustini et pseudo-Hieronymi in quibus haec assumptio in dubium ponebatur, prodit, ita ut non sine ratione tamquam illorum scriptorum impugnatio considerari possit" *Op. cit.*, 206

Virginis et Matris Domini resolutione temporali et assumptione perenni. . .¹⁴ He freely admits that there is no mention of Our Lady in canonical Scripture after the feast of Pentecost. But that does not mean that we can know nothing about such matters as are not expressly mentioned in Sacred Scripture. "Fecunda est enim veritatis auctoritas,"¹⁵ a wonderfully succinct statement of the guiding principle of doctrinal development. "Sunt etiam quaedam quae quamvis commemorari ex toto omissa sint, vera tamen ratione creduntur, ad quod ipsa convenientia rei quemadmodum dux et praevia creditur."¹⁶

Now, what about the death and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin? Sacred Scripture tells us nothing about either of these facts, but it does recommend that we use our reason: ". . . unde divina Scriptura nihil commendat nisi quaerendum ratione quid consentiat veritati, fiatque ipsa veritas auctoritas, sine qua necesse est nec valeat auctoritas."¹⁷

The author does not hesitate to state that Mary died; his reasons are completely theological. "Memores enim condicionis humanae, mortem illam subuisse temporalem dicere non metui-mus, quam idem certe Filius qui et Deus et homo est, lege sortis humanae sustinuit."¹⁸ Mary, like her Son, is subjected to the common fate of mankind, simply because this is the condition of human nature as they possessed it.

The author also makes a clear distinction between death and corruption, and in the context of *Genesis* 3:19: "For dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." "Quod si de morte dicitur generalis est sententia, si de resolutione in pulverem: hanc conditionem Christi caro evasit . . ."¹⁹ There is no question but that Christ truly died, yet His flesh did not see

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 1141

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 1143

¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 1144

¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁹ *Ibid*

corruption. There is something similar that we know about Mary: "Maria . . . etsi communicat aerumnis Evae, non communicat parturiendo cum dolore."²⁰ Mary's childbearings were not multiplied; indeed, she brought forth her only-begotten Son without pain, became a Mother without ceasing to be a Virgin. This exception was owing to her "singular holiness" and her "singular grace."²¹

Such grace and holiness merit other exceptions "Non immerito ergo excipitur a quibusdam generalibus vera aestimatione, quam tanta servat gratia et attolit dignitatis praerogativa"²² And this would be especially true for her liberation from corruption "Quid ergo, si in tanta diversitate eam dicimus humanae sortis mortem subiisse, nec tamen eius vinculis retineri, per quam Deus voluit nasci et carnis substantia communicare, numquid impium erit?"²³

Pseudo-Augustine now enunciates a principle that has played a great part in the development of Mariology: "Scimus enim Iesum omnia posse qui de seipso ait: 'Data est mihi omnis potestas in caelo et in terra' (*Mt.* 28:18). Si ergo voluit integram Matrem virginitatis servare pudore, cur non velit incorruptam a putredinis servare fetore?"²⁴ I do not think that our author is arguing from the privilege of virginity to the privilege of incorruptibility. Rather he is arguing from the fact that virginity is an exception to the general condition of woman (in whose lot Mary did share somewhat) to the fact of incorruptibility as an exception (even though Mary suffers the general fate of death).

The basic principle of Pseudo-Augustine's whole argument is the likeness between Christ and Mary. From this principle he arrives with equal certitude at the fact of her death and her

²⁰ *Ibid*

²¹ *Ibid*

²² *Ibid*

²³ *Ibid*, 1145

²⁴ *Ibid*

Assumption: "Ecce igitur Maria fide et opere Christi ministratrix, et devota usque ad ejus mortem secutrix, non plus gressu quam imitationis, ut credendum est, affectu: si ibi non fuerit, ubi Christus ministros suos vult esse, ubi ergo erit? Et si ibi, numquid aequali gratia? Et si aequali gratia, ubi aequa Dei censura, qui unicuique reddit secundum sua merita? Si ergo merito Mariae viventis prae omnibus donata est gratia, mortuae erit minuenda? Absit quia si omnium sanctorum mors est pretiosa, Mariae sane est pretiosissima: quam tanta comitata est gratia, ut Mater Dei dicatur, et sit."²⁵

In another eloquent passage, Pseudo-Augustine sums up his argument in the words, "secutrix Dei."²⁶ Truly the author merits the praise of both Balić and Jugie²⁷

There is not much additional information regarding our problem to be found in the followers of either Pseudo-Jerome or Pseudo-Augustine. Perhaps one follower of Pseudo-Jerome deserves special mention—Atton of Vercell (960).²⁸ He seems to write under the influence of both Pseudo-Jerome and Pseudo-Augustine. He does not dare affirm the resurrection of Mary, since it is not taught by the Fathers. However, he is inclined to believe it: "... quid mirum si Matri per quemdam miserationis affectum Dominus anticipando praestitit quod omnibus in fine saeculi sanctis donabit, cum mortalia corpora immor-

²⁵ *Ibid*, 1147.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 1148

²⁷ Balić, *op cit*, 210. "Ut ex tota hac expositione elicitur, auctor sensum communem fidelum cum principis theologicis concordando mortem et corpoream assumptionem B Virginis ubi conclusiones theologicas morali nexu cum veritatibus expresse revelatis coniunctas habet, quas ipse, tot rationibus convenientiae ductus, vera fide credit" Jugie, *op. cit*, 289: "On peut dire que, le premier en Occident, notre Pseudo-Augustin a jeté les fondements de la théologie de l'assomption et que, grâce à lui, la théologie latine, si pauvre, si en retard sur la théologie grecque, a rattrapé et dépassé même celle-ci par la netteté de la pensée et la manière de poser le problème"

²⁸ Atto Vercellensis, *In assumptione beatae Dei Genetricis semper virginis Mariae*, sermo 17, *PL* 134, 856-857.

talitate induerit."²⁹ He has no doubt about Mary's death, for her Son also died.³⁰

Of the followers of Pseudo-Augustine, Abelard (1142) testifies to Mary's death by his interpretation of the collect *Veneranda*.³¹ Hugh of St. Victor (1143) adds the point that Mary's death is without suffering.³² St. Amadeus of Lausanne (1159) emphasizes the contrast between Eve and Mary, and interprets Mary's triumph over Satan as freedom, not from death, but from corruption.³³ St. Martin of León (1203), in symbolic language, suggests a meritorious relation between Mary's life and her liberation from the tomb.³⁴

II. THE MIDDLE AND LATE SCHOLASTIC PERIOD TO THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

This part will be divided into five unequal sections. The first two will be devoted to what are minor aspects of the scholastics' doctrine on Mary's death. The first will consider the length of time they thought her body remained in the tomb; the second will cite the few authors who explicitly discuss the certainty of Mary's death. The third and fourth sections will attempt to present somewhat systematically the reasons given by our authors for Mary's death. A concluding section will be devoted to the manner of Mary's death.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, 857

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Petrus Abaelardus, *In assumptione beatae Mariae*, sermo 26, *PL* 178, 541

³² *De assumptione et decem praeconis Mariae semper virginis*; *PL* 177, 807-808. This work is of uncertain origin, but is found among works attributed to Hugh of St. Victor.

³³ Amadeus Lausannensis, *De B. Virginis obitu, assumptione in caelum, exaltatione ad Filii dexteram*, homilia 7; *PL* 188, 1337

³⁴ Martinus Legionensis, *In assumptione sanctae Mariae*, sermo 3, *PL* 209, 23

A. *The Length of Time Mary's Body Remained in the Tomb*

Most references to this subject are off-hand remarks that allow us little basis for judging about the certitude of the author.

Card. Matthew of Aquasparta, O.F.M. (1302), explicitly states that he does not believe anyone knows with certainty unless it be revealed. He then refers to a vision which places the time at 40 days.³⁵

Amadeus de Menez Silva, O.F.M. (1482), seems quite certain that Mary remained dead 15 hours, for 10 of which her body rested in the tomb. He explains that the revelations of S. Brigid and S. Elizabeth were mistakenly understood by their confessors³⁶

William of Ware, O.F.M. (c. 1300), is satisfied with a "statum"³⁷ Mary rose immediately after she had died

Most authors who mention any duration state three days³⁸ Bartholomew of Bologna, O.F.M. (after 1294), expands this position a little. He agrees on the three days, but suggests that Mary stayed a little longer in the tomb than did Our Lord. The reason for this is Mary's proximity to Christ as well as the

³⁵ Matthaeus ab Aquasparta, *De assumptione beatae Virginis*, sermo "Multiplicatae sunt aquae," cod 460 Bahlč, *op cit*, 251

³⁶ Amadeus de Menez Silva, *Apocalysis nova, De beata virgine Maria, raptus* 8, ed P. Alva et Astorga, *Bibliotheca virginialis*, 1 (Madrid, 1648) 725^b-726^a.

³⁷ Guilielmus de Ware, *Quaestiones super III Sent*, In quaestione "Utrum corpus Christi fuerit in aliquo putrefactum in triduo" (d 8, q 12), Bahlč, *op cit*, 247-248

³⁸ Robertus Caracciolo de Licio, *Opus de Laudibus sanctorum*, sermo 29 *De assumptione et exaltatione Virginis sacratissimae* (Venice, 1489), Bahlč, *op cit*, 268. Iacobus a Voragine, *Sermones de sanctis per anni totius circulum De assumptione Virginis gloriosae*, sermo 1 (Venice, 1573), Bahlč, *op cit*, 301. Aiguani Michael, *Quadragesimale*, Ravennae, bibl. Class. cod 400; Bahlč, *op cit*, 323. Martinengius Titus Prosper, *Theotocodia sive Parthenodia* (Rome, 1583), Bahlč, *op cit*, 331. Petrus de Natalibus, *Catalogus sanctorum et gestorum eorum*, lib 7, c 65 (Venice, 1506), Bahlč, *op cit*, 353

fact that her separation from God through original sin was very brief.³⁹

It seems clear enough that the preference for three days is motivated by doctrine rather than history. The doctrinal principle is simply the similarity between Son and Mother, which we shall see was used also to establish the fact of Mary's death.

B. *Certitude in Regard to the Fact of Mary's Death*

There is during this period universal acceptance of the fact of Mary's death. Jugie could find only one ambiguous text in support of his theory of immortality.⁴⁰ Even defenders of Mary's Immaculate Conception do not hesitate to accept her death as a fact.

There are, however, very few explicit references to the certitude of her death. Many statements concerning it are prefaced by a "pie creditur," but this, more than likely, refers to the Assumption which is also mentioned.

Peter Aureolus, O F M. (1322), accepts the fact of death as "secundum fidem."⁴¹

Denis the Carthusian (1471) holds it "pro certo."⁴²

³⁹ Bartholomaeus Bononiensis, *Quaestiones de corporali beatae Mariae virginis assumptione*, quaest. 1, ed. A. Deneffe, in collectione *Opuscula et textus historiam Ecclesiae eiusque vitam atque doctrinam illustrantia. Series scholastica*, fasc. 9, (Munster, 1930), Bahlé, *op. cit.*, 244.

⁴⁰ Jugie cites the following: "Beata Virgo, quia Christum genuit, ut pie creditur, vivens ad caelestem gloriam evolavit. Et sicut Henoch testimonium habet placuisse Deo, secundum Apotolum, sic haec plus omni creaturae." Franciscus de Mayronis, *Sermones de laudibus sanctorum. Sermo 1 in festo natiuitatis beatae Mariae Virginis* (Basle, 1498), Jugie, *op. cit.*, 402, n. 4. As Jugie himself admits, and as Bahlé shows with several citations, Francis explicitly holds that Mary died. Cf. Bahlé, *op. cit.*, 253-254.

⁴¹ " . . . quoniam ibi eius accipitur pro corpore mortuo, a quo Virgo excepta non fuit, quae secundum fidem mortem subit temporalem." *Repercussorium*, concl. 8, in *Bibliotheca franciscana scholastica medi aevi*, III (Quaracchi, 1904) 143.

⁴² "Sicque pro certo relinquatur eam mortuam ac sepultam fuisse sicut vere fuit mortalis." *De dignitate et laudibus beatae virginis Mariae*, lib. 4, a. 2, *Opera Omnia*, 36 (Tournay, 1908) 151^a, Bahlé, *op. cit.*, 336.

Gabriel Biel (1495) explicitly excludes apparent death. Mary was ever perfectly free from all sin, but not from all the consequences of sin. If she had been free from all, men might have mistaken her for a goddess. Just as her Son subjected Himself to suffering and death, which are consequences of sin, so the Mother is also subject to death. "Hodierna quoque die per realem separationem animae a corpore vere mortua fuit."⁴³

Arnold Albertinus, Bishop of Badajoz (1514), "pro sua indole impulsiva," says Balić, goes so far as to label a denial of Mary's death as smacking of heresy and scandalous.⁴⁴ The reason for his position is the teaching of the Church that death and resurrection are absolutely universal.⁴⁵

C. Doctrinal Reasons for Mary's Death

In this section we shall try to list various reasons assigned for Mary's death, excepting for the moment the intricate question of the relation between original sin and death, which we will consider in the following section.

(1) Likeness to Her Son.

I think it can be shown that this principle is predominant in the thought of all the scholastic writers in their responses to the questions of Mary's death and Assumption. Authors who do not accept Mary's Immaculate Conception still find likeness with a difference. Defenders of the privilege of the Immaculate

⁴³ *De festis divinae virginis Mariae varii atque eruditi sermones. De assumptione beatae virginis Mariae, sermo 2* (Brescia, 1583) 101^a, Balić, *op cit*, 338.

⁴⁴ "Inde stante hac veritate catholica universalis omnium mortis et carnis resurrectionis, sequitur manifeste quod dicere Dominam, Dei Genitricem non fuisse mortuam et sic viam universae carnis non fuisse ingressam, sapit haeresim et praebet scandalum christifidelibus incidendi in haeresim proprie dictam." *Tractatus solemniss et aureus de agnoscendis assertionibus catholicis et haereticis*, q 18, n 6, ed P Alva et Astorga, *Bibliotheca virginialis*, 3 (Madrid, 1648) 248^a.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

Conception make even a stronger case for Mary's death on the basis of likeness to her Son. We shall see more of this in the next section; for the moment, we shall be satisfied with certain general statements of the principle, which indicate its validity apart from the context of original sin

St Bonaventure (1274) states it with unusual vigor: "non fuit decens Filium Dei habere Matrem immortalem, cum ipse esset mortalis."⁴⁶

Conrad of Saxony, O.F.M. (1279), applies *Psalm* 131 8: "Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place: thou and the ark, which thou hast sanctified," to both the Son and the Mother.⁴⁷

William Peraldus, O P (c 1270), sees a simple parallel between Mary's death and her Son's.⁴⁸

Lawrence Opimus, O S M. (fl. c. 1375), sees a special fittingness that all should taste death even as Christ tasted it.⁴⁹

(2) *The condition of Mary's flesh.*

This reason appears in many texts inextricably bound up with the question of original sin; but it seems that in the following places, it assumes an independent status, although intimately linked with the previous reason, the similarity between Mother and Son. There is also a distinct echo of the Collect *Veneranda*.

⁴⁶ *In III Sent*, d 15, a 1, q 3, ad 3; *Opera Omnia*, 3 (Quaracchi, 1885), 78^b.

⁴⁷ "Hoc enim corpus est arca sanctissima Dei, quam decuit non putrefieri, sed instar Filii sui ante omnem putrefactionem suscitari" *Speculum beatae Mariae virginis*, lect 2 (ed Quaracchi, 1904) 20

⁴⁸ "Hodie recolunt fideles transitum Matris Dei ab hac vita mortali, et exitum eius ab hoc saeculo nequam per mortem sicut Filius eius exierat inde," *Sermones per annum In assumptione beatae Mariae Virginis*, sermo 1, inter *Opera Omnia Guillelmi Alverni*, 2 (Paris, 1674), Balé, *op cit*, 289

⁴⁹ " . secunda, quia decuit ut sicut Christus incidit, et voluntarie, [in] poenam mortis, ita quilibet poenam illam gustaret" *Egregia super quatuor libros Sententiarum lectura Parisius habita*, lib III, d 3-7, q 1 (ed Venice, 1532), Balé, *op cit*, 334.

Matthew of Aquasparta (1302), for example, states that Mary was not assumed into heaven without death intervening, "sed quoniam etsi propter conditionem carnis migravit a corpore et interveniente morte anima vere fuit a corpore separata, tamen mortis nexibus teneri non potuit. . . ." ⁵⁰

S Bernadine of Siena (1444) offers the same reason, but emphasizes the unity between Christ and His Mother in flesh, "Prima ratio est propter unitatem, scilicet substantiae carnis in matre et prole. Quum enim ex carne matris decidatur naturaliter caro proles, eadem utriusque est profecto substantia carnis. Ergo a generali sententia mortis, quamvis Christus Dei Filius non exemerit Matrem, quia ab illa nullus, nec ipse voluit esse alienus, ac per hoc mortuus est Filius, mortua est Mater. . . ." ⁵¹

Gabriel Biel (1495) gives a slightly different twist to this argument: Though Mary underwent death, she is freed from many of the consequences. "Pulchra correspondentia: fuit namque Virgo benedicta pura homo ac filia Adae et Evae quia communi lege propagata, sed ab omni peccato originali et actuali liberrima et ita omnium hominum dignissima. Debuit ergo ad utriusque probationem in quibusdam communicare filiis Adae in naturae infirmitate, et in quibusdam eximi ne non putaretur de filiis Adae et ne similis per omnia eis iudicaretur. Communicavit ergo in morte, exempta est quantum ad nexus mortis." ⁵²

Arguments such as these lead to the certain conclusion that Mary, as Mother of Christ, is mortal and passible during her life-time. She is, at least, not intrinsically immortal, for Christ took His human nature from her.

⁵⁰ *Op cit*, codex 640, fol 229^v. Bahlé, *op cit*, 248

⁵¹ Bernardinus Senensis, *Sermones eximii*, sermo 12 *De assumptione gloriosae virginis Mariae*, a 3, c 1, 4 (Venice, 1745) 122^b-123^a, Bahlé, *op cit*, 265

⁵² *Op cit*, sermo 2, *ed cit*, 101^a. Bahlé, *op cit*, 339

(3) *Triumph over death in both sexes.*

Two important authors see in the fact of Mary's death and anticipated resurrection a special fittingness, because she is a woman.

The sixth of seven arguments provided by Matthæw of Aquasparta (1302) runs as follows: "Sexta ratio est propter perfectum testimonium resurrectionis. Ut enim dicit Augustinus: 'Christus Dominus noster utrumque sexum curaturus advenit' et ideo virum suscepit, natus tamen ex femina. Perfecta autem curatio, perfecta liberatio manifestatur in resurrectione. Ergo resurrectio in utroque sexu debuit manifestari ad perfectum testimonium curationis. Sicut igitur quantum ad sexum virilem manifestata est et apparuit in Christo, in nulla alia femina manifestari congruentius potuit vel debuit et decuit quam in Matre Christi quae ab omni corruptione in vita libera exstitit. . . ." ⁵³

The same argument is given by S. Bernadine of Siena (1444) in practically the same words.⁵⁴ In both texts it seems that the authors are thinking of a triumph over death which requires the intervention of death followed by the anticipated resurrection.

(4) *By her death Mary merits her resurrection and glorification in heaven.*

This argument for Our Lady's death might well play a more important part in contemporary discussion than it does. It has been formulated by St. Thomas, though he does not apply it to Mary.

Speaking of the possibility of Christ's meriting for Himself, the Angelic Doctor says: ⁵⁵ "To have any good thing of oneself (*per se*) is more excellent than to have it from another.

⁵³ *Op cit*, codex 640, fol 230^v-231^r Bahlé, *op cit*, 251

⁵⁴ *Op cit*, 123^b. Bahlé, *op cit*, 266

⁵⁵ *Summa Theologiae*, III, q 19, a 3

. . . Now a thing is said to have, of itself, that of which it is to some extent the cause. But of whatever good we possess the first cause by authority is God; and in this way no creature has any good of itself. . . Nevertheless, in a secondary manner, anyone may be a cause, to himself, of having certain good things, and thus whoever has anything by his own merit has it, in a manner, of himself. Hence it is better to have a thing by merit than without merit" Does it follow from this that it would have been better for Our Lord to merit everything? Not at all St Thomas continues. "He must have by merit what others have by merit, unless it be of such a nature that its want would detract from Christ's dignity and perfection more than would accrue to Him by merit." Hence, the hypostatic union itself, the fullness of knowledge and grace, the beatific vision are not objects of merit for Our Lord. "But the glory of the body, and the like, are less than the dignity of meriting, which pertains to the virtue of charity."

Later ⁵⁶ St. Thomas applies this principle explicitly to the passion and death of Our Lord with respect to His exaltation. In reply to Objection 2 of the same article, St. Thomas makes this important precision: ". . . in the Passion He merited His exaltation by way of recompense even on behalf of His body: since it is only just that the body, which from charity was subjected to the Passion, should receive recompense in glory."

Father E. Longpré, O.F.M., quotes an unedited lecture of Scotus, in which he does apply this principle to Our Lady: "Undoubtedly Christ could have won for His Mother immediate glory (*potuit Matri mereri gloriam a principio*), but it is more glorious for the Virgin to acquire glory by her merits than without her concurrence; this is why she has not been preserved from certain penalties capable of increasing her merit." ⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, a 49, a 6.

⁵⁷ *L'assomption et l'école franciscaine*, in *SM* 4, 214 The Lecture is found in ms 439 of the Cathedral of Prague

Robert Cowton, O.F.M., a disciple of Scotus, uses the same argument against those who wish to establish a connection between Mary's death and her contraction of original sin.⁵⁸

Bartholomew Albizzi de Pisis, O.F.M. (1401), makes the point that the Church prays that we may be led to the glory of the resurrection through the merits of Mary. It is fitting then that she merit the resurrection for herself and others.⁵⁹

Bernardine de Bustis, O.F.M. (1500), likewise sees in Mary's death a wise disposition of Providence "ad augmentum gloriae."⁶⁰

D. *The Death of Our Lady and Sin*

As we have seen, the authors of our period are unanimous in asserting that Mary died. They are also aware of the fact that by the sin of one man death enter into this world. Hence, death, in some sense, is a consequence of sin, of original sin, specifically a punishment for sin.

⁵⁸ "Ad quartum Augustinus in libro *Retractionum*, cum dicat quod omnis poena si inflicta est, pro peccato inflicta est, dico quod verum est de poena inflicta, et non de voluntarie assumpta, sicut Christus assumpsit, non est verum, et ideo dico ulterius quod licet Deus eam ex passione Christi ex poena peccati praeservasset, a passionibus tamen laudabilibus et meritorius non praeservasset, et hoc quia laudabilis est merito mereri proprio quam tantum alieno, et ideo tales passiones habere posset nec ab illis debuit praeservari, ab omni tamen labe peccati praeservata fuit. Sed licet sic esse potuerit." In *III Sent* d 3 (Oxford, Merton College, ms 92), C. Piana, *L'assomption de la Vierge et l'école franciscaine du XV^e siècle*, in *SM* 6, 68. Dom O. Lottin has shown that Robert depends on the oral teaching of Scotus, Robert Cowton et Jean Duns Scot, in *RTAM*, 21 (1955) 281-294.

⁵⁹ "Ecclesia orat ut meritis Mariae ad resurrectionis gloriam perducamur et eius meritis id mereamur. Sed quomodo resurrectionem futuram nobis meretur, si ipsa eam iam non haberet? Quia certum est quod prius sibi, deinde nobis meretur." *De vita et laudibus beatae Mariae virginis libri sex*, lib. 5, fructus 7 (Venice, 1596), Balić, *op cit*, 262.

⁶⁰ Bernardinus de Bustis, *Mariale de singulis festivitibus beatae Virginis per modum sermonum tractans*, sermo 2 *De conceptione Mariae*, pars 1 (Strasbourg, 1498), Balić, *op cit*, 271.

While they held diverse theories of what constituted the immortality of primitive man, they all agreed that immortality was not restored in the Christian order, not even to Christ and Mary.⁶¹ By divine dispensation, Christ comes into the world with passible flesh; He truly suffers and dies. The reason for Mary's passibility and death is not quite as simple; it is complicated by the problem of whether or not she contracted original sin.

Father Piana, O.F.M., maintains that both St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas argued against the Immaculate Conception from the fact that Mary died. This seems to be true of St. Bonaventure,⁶² and also of St. Albert,⁶³ but I find no evidence of it in St. Thomas.⁶⁴ Obviously, it is a dangerous argument, for Christ also died.

It might be well to trace St. Thomas' position on the nature of death in the present order; it is quite similar to that of St. Bonaventure. In his *Commentary on the Sentences*, St. Thomas notes the twofold character of the penalties of original sin, which infects primarily and *per se* the nature, and through the nature, the person. The penalty imposed on the person is the deprivation of the vision of God. The other penalty is inflicted because of the infection of the nature; this involves the necessity of dying, passibility, rebellion of the flesh against the spirit, and such like. These are all caused by the principles of nature

⁶¹ Cf. Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., *The Relation between Sin and Death according to Mediaeval Theologians*, in *SM* 7, 50-80.

⁶² Thus he argues against the Immaculate Conception "cum illud appareat ex multiplici ipsius poenaltate, quam non est dicere ipsam passam esse propter aliorum redemptionem, quam etiam non est dicere per assumptionem habuisse, sed per contractionem." In *III Sent.* d. 3, pars 1, a. 1, q. 2 (*ed. cit.*, 3, 67b).

⁶³ "Tertia causa fuit firmitas sententiae quia dixit 'Morte morieris.' Quod de utraque morte in propagatione intelligitur." In *III Sent.*, d. 3, A, art. 4, ad 4um, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Vivès, 38, 47.

⁶⁴ Piana refers to *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 14, a. 3, ad 1um, where St. Thomas merely states: "Caro Virginis concepta fuit in originali peccato, et ideo hos defectus contraxit." For Piana, cf. *La morte e l'assunzione della B.V. nella letteratura medioevale*, in *SM* 1, 285-286.

and are found in every member of the human family, unless they are miraculously forestalled.⁶⁵

St. Thomas also makes a distinction between the so-called "fomes peccati" and the other penalties of original sin: "The inferior powers pertaining to the sensitive appetite have a natural capacity to be obedient to reason; but not the bodily powers, nor those of the bodily humors, nor those of the vegetative soul . . . And hence perfection of virtue, which is in accordance with right reason, does not exclude the passibility of body; yet it excludes the fomes of sin, the nature of which consists in the resistance of the sensitive appetite to reason."⁶⁶

All this is stated succinctly by St. Bonaventure: "Quoniam igitur Christus venerat naturam humanam redimere communiter sine personarum distinctione; hinc est quod defectus naturales, non personales defectus, poenales tantum, non vitiosos, debuit in se habere. . . ."⁶⁷

Death is a punishment for sin, even in Christ. There is, however, a great difference between the necessity by which Christ dies and that by which we die. St. Thomas explains this clearly from the cause of death in general. "The cause of death and other corporeal defects of human nature is twofold: the first is remote, and results from the material principles of the human body, inasmuch as it is made up of contraries. But this cause was held in check by original justice. Hence the proximate cause of death and other defects is sin, whereby original justice is withdrawn. And thus, because Christ was without sin, He is said not to have contracted these defects, but to have assumed them."⁶⁸

St. Thomas is most explicit in insisting on the indirect causality of sin; it is merely a *per accidens* cause of death. It

⁶⁵ *II Sent*, d 32, q 1, a 2.

⁶⁶ *Summa Theologiae*, III, q 15, a 2, ad 1^{um}

⁶⁷ *III Sent*, d 15, a 1, quæst 2, *ed cit*, 3, 333ab

⁶⁸ *Summa Theologiae*, III, q 14, a 3, ad 2^{um}

acts *removens prohibens*.⁶⁹ This is the reason why Christ can take upon Himself the penalty of sin, without the guilt of sin. He cannot be said to contract the defect, but to freely take it upon Himself.

St. Bonaventure expresses it somewhat similarly: "Dico autem ipsos fuisse a voluntate non tanquam ab infligente de novo, sed tanquam a relinquente et acceptante, cum in eius potestate et arbitrio esset defectus illos excludere" ⁷⁰

The divine will is therefore only the permissive cause. The proximately effective cause is His birth from Mary. ". . . Christus vero passibilitatem habuit absque aliquo reatu in ipso reperto, ex sola dispensatione divina. Et ideo non dicuntur omnino fuisse in Christo a natura, nec tamen fuerunt omnino praeter naturam; de natura enim Matris erat talem filium generare." ⁷¹

Both these theologians, as well as all their contemporaries, who thought that Mary was at least conceived in original sin, admit that she, unlike her Son, contracted the defects following upon original sin ⁷² However, as St. Thomas makes quite clear, this does not change the status of death as a punishment for sin: "Christus in huiusmodi defectibus assimilatus est aliis hominibus quantum ad qualitatem defectum, non autem quantum ad causam." ⁷³ The quality of the defects remain the same, even their penal character; the cause is completely different.

But Our Lady did not contract original sin and hence did not contract its penalties. Did she nevertheless die and is her death also a "penalty" connected in some way with original sin?

Father Balic, O F M, cites an interesting passage of arms between St. Bonaventure and Pelbart of Temeswar, O F.M., on this particular point. In one passage St. Bonaventure admits

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, I-II, q 85, a 5

⁷⁰ *III Sent* d 14, a 1, quae 3, *ed cit*, 3, 335a

⁷¹ *Ibid*, sol 4, 3, 335b.

⁷² Cf *supra*, n 62, n 64.

⁷³ *Summa Theologiae*, III, q 14, a 3, ad 3^{um}.

that Mary would be immortal, if she were immune from original sin: "Si beata Virgo caruit originali peccato, caruit merito mortis. ergo vel iniustitia facta est ei cum mortua est, vel dispensative pro salute generis humani mortua est. Sed primum facit ad contumeliam Dei, quia, si illud verum est, Deus non est iustus retributor, secundum ad contumeliam Christi, quia, si illud verum est, Christus non est sufficiens redemptor; ergo utrumque falsum est et impossibile. Restat ergo quod habuit peccatum originale."⁷⁴

The problem is more elaborately treated by Pelbart. He asks: Did the Blessed Virgin have to die, was she obliged to the law of death as other men? He cites three arguments in the negative: (1) Mary was not obliged to die, because death is due to, and inflicted for, original sin; but the Blessed Virgin was preserved free from original sin. It would be an injustice, then, to inflict death upon her. (2) Man in the state of innocence did not have to die. Mary is very close to this state and so should have the privilege of being transferred alive to glory. (3) Finally, there is the case of St. John the Evangelist.

Pelbart replies with three arguments in the affirmative: (1) Lest Mary seem greater than Christ, and also that she merit the perfection of grace. (2) Even though the Mother of God was preserved free from the stain of original sin, she was not wholly freed from the penalty of that sin. And the reason for this is that the grace of her sanctification removed only sin, and not the penalty. If Christ willed to undergo the penalties voluntarily, is it any wonder that the Blessed Virgin, although freed from sin, had to undergo the penalties of this life and death itself? (3) The Mother of God, owing to the mode of her natural origin was obliged to undergo death, despite her preservation from sin. Grace prevented any infection of the soul, but it did not prevent a deformity (*foeditas*) of the

⁷⁴ *III Sent.*, d. 3, pars 1, a. 1, q. 2, 4a ratio in contrarium, *ed. cit.*, 3, 66ab, cited by Balic, *op. cit.*, 240, n. 2

flesh, which was naturally conceived according to the ordinary mode of propagation from Adam by intercourse.

Pelbart concludes that Christ did not in any sense contract these penalties, because He was supernaturally conceived, but that Mary did, since she was naturally conceived.⁷⁵ It is unfortunate that he retains the notion of something shameful in natural propagation. Otherwise his argument is solid. Mary has a nature that is subject to death, because that is the kind of nature she received from her parents.

Father Piana admits that this was the position of Scotus and most of the defenders of the Immaculate Conception.⁷⁶

There is, however, a final position expressed by a few authors, which he seems to look upon with great favor. Mary's death has nothing to do with sin, it is merely a natural occurrence. For this position he quotes Raoul de Hotot, early in the fourteenth century, who says: "Mortua fuit (Virgo) ex quodam defectu naturali. Sicut si Deus modo crearet hominem ex lapide, moreretur, sicut si esset ex propagatione natus, et tamen non haberet peccatum originale; ita dico de beata Maria, quod ex defectu naturali mortua fuit."⁷⁷

Piana cites also an early disciple of Scotus, Peter of Aquila who explains the death of both Our Lord and Our Lady in this way.⁷⁸

Again, according to Piana, Richard of Bromwych, O S B. (c. 1305-1310), "indicava la vera regione della morte della

⁷⁵ Pelbartus de Temeswar, *Stellarium coronae gloriosissimae Virginis*, lib 10: *De assumptione beatæ Mariæ*, pars 1, a 1 (Venice, 1585), Balić, *op cit*, 278-279

⁷⁶ C. Piana, *La morte e l'assunzione della B V nella letteratura medioevale*, in *SM* 1, 296

⁷⁷ Raoul de Hotot, *III Sent*, d 3, Pavia, Bibl Universitaria, cod 244, Piana, *art cit*, 298

⁷⁸ "Dico quod mors non est poena peccati, si enim fieret unus homo in puris naturalibus et non haberet peccatum originale, adhuc esset mortalis, et hoc patet de Christo qui nullum habuit peccatum et tamen fuit mortalis" *III Sent*, d 3, a 1, ed Paolini, 3 (Levanti, 1907), Piana, *art cit*, 298

Vergine contro l'argomento dei maculisti," when he writes. "Cum dicitur quod (Maria) dolores et mortem sustinuit, dicendum quod, si unus homo haberet pura naturalia non infecta et non haberet habitum gratuitum, qui prohiberet eum mori, moreretur naturaliter, et ideo dicit Augustinus, II de Baptismo parvulorum, quod Christus defecisset senio, si vixisset. Ergo mori non est propter peccatum praecise."⁷⁹

Two other anonymous authorities are cited by Piana in favor of this position.⁸⁰ However, his second authority gives us a choice of solutions. The first is a repetition of the above. He then continues "Aliter potest dici quod beata Virgo erat de iure et ex natura debitor et peccati et poenarum huiusmodi. Potuit ergo Deus et voluit sua gratia praeservare ipsam a peccato, quod erat sibi nocivum et Deo odiosum, et non ab huiusmodi poenis quae poterant sibi valere ad meritum Unde et eos in Christo relinquit"⁸¹ This argument, if rightly understood, will, I think, prove to be an adequate expression of the reason why Mary died

There seems to be a swing toward the other position, however. And I would like to make my own the comment of Sibum, inspired by a passage of St. Thomas. "Let us note in passing that the Holy Doctor seems to be unacquainted with the subtle distinction between death involving corruption, which would be a penalty for sin, and death abstracting from corruption, which would not be a punishment and hence could belong to Jesus and Mary. . . . This theory seems to overlook the fact that death is the fundamental corruption of the human composite, decomposition is secondary. If Christ underwent the

⁷⁹ *III Sent.*, d. 3, Worcester, Cathedral Library, cod. 139, Piana, *art. cit.*, 298-299

⁸⁰ *De beata Virgine quaerebatur utrum ipsa contraxit originale peccatum*, cod. Vatic. lat. 932 *Tertio quaerebatur utrum beata Virgo fuerit prius sancta quam nata*, cod. 677, Bibl. Commun. Assisi Cf. Piana, *art. cit.*, 298, n. 2.

⁸¹ *Op. cit.* Piana, *art. cit.*, 298

first, it is not because it is not a punishment for sin, but quite the contrary."⁸²

To see Our Lady's death as a mere defect of nature, a purely natural occurrence, is to remove her from the Christian order and establish her in an order apart, like a man produced directly by God from a stone.⁸³ Such a theory would also have repercussions on the doctrine of Mary's Compassion.

Let us rather say with the anonymous author of the fourteenth century: God left these penalties in Mary, as He did in Christ, for her glory

We shall close this section with one further thought from St. Thomas: "Now when punishment is satisfactory, it loses somewhat of the nature of punishment: for the nature of punishment is to be against the will, and although satisfactory punishment, absolutely speaking, is against the will, nevertheless in this particular case and for this particular purpose, it is voluntary. . . We must, therefore, say that, when the stain of sin has been removed, there may remain a debt of punishment, not indeed of punishment simply, but of satisfactory punishment"⁸⁴ As we well know, the debt of satisfactory punishment can be assumed by another, who, out of charity, is willing to undergo it. To have a nature that was capable of assuming this debt of punishment was the price Mary willingly paid in order to be the Mother of Our Savior and our Mother.

⁸² L. Sibum, *La mort et l'assomption de Marie*, in *RA* 62 (1936) 660, n. 1

⁸³ In response to an appeal by Father Jugie to remember that Mary is in an order apart (*op cit*, 568), Father J.-M. Parent, O.P., remarks. "La remarque est juste à condition de se rappeler que cet ordre à part est celui du Christ Rédempteur dont Marie a reçu plus que tous les autres rachetés. Et justement, parce qu'elle est plus parfaite, la rédemption dont elle a bénéficié suppose une plus entière conformité au Christ, qui en est le principe" *La Sainte Vierge est-elle morte?*, in *SM* 4, 284-285. This remark of Parent is explicitly approved by Ch. Boyer, *Raisons de la mort de la Très-Sainte Vierge*, in *SM* 6, 127

⁸⁴ *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 87, a. 6

E. *The Manner of Mary's Death*

Here we wish to call your attention to several texts that very beautifully attribute the immediate cause of Mary's death to love.

Abbot Guerricus (1175) devotes a whole sermon to the subject, using as his text the verse from the *Canticles*: "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, tell him that I languish with love."⁸⁵ As the time approaches for Mary to leave the body, she is lying in bed, as though too weak to rise. The daughters of Jerusalem visit her, according to the preacher, they are angels. They ask how it is that the Lady seems ill and listless. For some days now they have missed her from her accustomed visits to the holy places. How is it possible that you are ill, you, in whose body the health of the world dwelt for so long? Mary replies that they would not be surprised if they recall what kind of body her Son had. Why should I grieve, if He has not given to my body, what He did not give to His own? He took such a body from a merciful will, I have mine by natural necessity. Don't be surprised: "Sane aliud est sanitas, aliud est sanctitas." Besides, my weakness is the weakness of love. I languish more from impatience of love than from the sting of pain, I am more wounded by charity, than burdened by illness. The author then points out that it was Mary's lot ever to languish. From the beginning she suffered the pangs of fear, fear of what was in store for her Son; later, on Calvary, the pain of sorrow, since the longings of love. "nunc amore et desiderio felicius, sed mirabilius cruciatur, quia sedentem in coelo non tenet."⁸⁶

Pseudo-Albert the Great (1280) is another advocate of Mary's death by love. He points out that nature inclines to the flesh, the body, that is, to continued unity of soul and body.

⁸⁵ *Cant*, 5 8

⁸⁶ Abbas Guerricus, *In assumptionem B M Virginis*, sermo 2, PL 185, 190-193.

But charity inclines from the body to union with Christ. It can happen that the tendency upwards, toward Christ, can become so intense that the lesser tendency of the soul to the body is overcome "ergo charitas tantum potest sursum trahere, quod, anima separetur a corpore et sic morietur prae amore." He admits that it would be painful for the soul to separate from the body, but that is deadened by the pain of separation from Christ, and quite forgotten in the expectancy of being reunited with her Son.⁸⁷

May we not add that the merit of Mary's death lies precisely here. Her love for her Son was so intense that she was willing to leave her body so that she might rejoin Him. She was willing to accept the dissolution of her person, if that was required in order to see her Son once more. She was willing: we know that God accepted her death as a token of her love, but immediately rewarded her by an anticipated resurrection.

It seems to me that Jugie dismisses this position too lightly, even distorting it in the process.⁸⁸ In two articles of one of his Disputed Questions, *de Veritate*, St. Thomas presents us with two distinct possibilities in this regard. First of all, regarding the passions of man's sensitive nature "Et inde est quod dolor et tristitia et timor, et aliquae huiusmodi passiones, quae sunt respectu mali, habent rationem passionis magis quam gaudium et amor et alia huiusmodi, quae sunt respectu boni; quamvis in his ratio passionis salvetur, secundum quod cor per huiusmodi dilatur vel accenditur, vel qualitercumque disponitur aliter quam sit communis dispositio: unde ex huiusmodi affectionibus aliquem mori contingit."⁸⁹ Here death would be

⁸⁷ Cf. *Mariale, sive quaestiones super "Missus est,"* q. 131, among the works of St. Albert the Great, *ed. cit.*, 37, 185. For an exhaustive and scholarly discussion of the authentic Marian works of St. Albert, cf. A. Fries, CSSR, *Die unter dem Namen des Albertus Magnus überlieferten mariologischen Schriften*, in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters*, 37, 4 (Münster, 1954).

⁸⁸ *Op. cit.*, 570 ff.

⁸⁹ *Quaest. disp. de veritate*, q. 26, a. 8.

brought about by an excess of passion, which could very well be reprehensible. But the same thing can take place from the side of the spiritual element in man: "Secundum ordinem naturae, propter colligantiam virium animae in una essentia, et animae et corporis in uno 'esse compositi, vires superiores et inferiores, et etiam corpus invicem in se effluunt quod in aliquo eorum superabundat; et inde est quod ex apprehensione animae transmutatur corpus secundum calorem et frigus, et quandoque usque ad sanitatem et aegritudinem, et usque ad mortem. contingit enim aliquem ex gaudio vel tristitia vel amore mortem incurrere" ⁹⁰ Since this impetus is spiritual it would be under the control of the reason. In the case of Our Lady, it would simply mean that at the moment God willed, the Holy Spirit, by a special impulse of charity, both strong and gracious, would cause Mary to elicit an act of charity so intense that her lower nature could not bear it and her soul would separate from her body in true death.

In conclusion, permit me to borrow the words of Father Boyer: ⁹¹ "I have led you only to a tomb. But from this tomb there shines the glory of Mary triumphing over death, the only glory that is worthy of the Mother of a God who died and rose again from the dead."

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⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, a 10

⁹¹ *Art. cit.*, 134.