

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION: OBSTACLES INHIBITING UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTANCE

In the first of his five sermons on the Immaculate Conception, Boussuet says: "There are certain strange and difficult propositions, which to bring conviction, require the employment of all the efforts of reasoning and all the inventions of rhetoric. On the contrary, there are others which at first glance cast a certain radiance on the soul which often makes one love them even before knowing them. Such propositions hardly require proof. If one will but remove the obstacles, throw light on the objections, the mind of itself will take to them spontaneously and willingly. I put in that class the one which I must establish to-day."¹

That idea is the theme of this paper. One might say that it has been the history of the evolution of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Following, therefore, the outline of the paper as originally scheduled, we will treat the history of the dogma from the angle of the chief difficulties it has had to overcome. I have selected three.

- I. The universality of the law of original sin and the opposition of the great medieval Doctors of the Church.
- II. The determination of the object of the belief and feast.
- III. The inclusion of the belief in the primitive deposit of Revelation.

¹ Il y a certaines propositions étranges et difficiles, qui pour être persuadées, demandent que l'on emploie tous les efforts du raisonnement et toutes les inventions de la rhétorique. Au contraire il y en a d'autres qui jettent au premier aspect un certain éclat dans les âmes, qui fait que souvent on les aime avant même que de les connaître. De telles propositions n'ont presque pas besoin de preuves. Qu'on lève seulement les obstacles, que l'on éclaircisse les objections, l'esprit s'y portera de soi-même, d'un mouvement volontaire. Je mets en ce rang celle que j'ai à établir aujourd'hui. J. Bossuet, *Oeuvres oratoires* (Paris, 1890), 1, 229.

I

Historically the first and greatest difficulty to the progress and understanding of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception has been the universal law of Original Sin, by which all Adam's descendants by way of natural propagation as such, are thereby constituted sinners.² It caused the greatest opposition, namely, that of St. Bernard and the great scholastic Doctors of the thirteenth Century; and the longest, since it did not finally and completely die out till almost the eve of the definition.³ This difficulty came into prominence even before there was question of explicit belief in the Immaculate Conception of Mary. The problem of the Immaculate Conception should normally have arisen with the heresy of Pelagianism and perhaps might have, if Nestorianism and the Council of Ephesus had occurred a little earlier. Julian of Eclanum put the question point blank to St. Augustine. Julian, still a Catholic Bishop at the time and not yet condemned, put Augustine in a very unfavorable parallel with Jovinian who had attacked the dogma of Mary's virginity. "He (Jovinian) destroys Mary's virginity by the condition of her giving birth. You write off Mary to the Devil by the condition of her being born." Augustine replied "Non transcribimus diabolo Mariam conditione nascendi, sed ideo quia ipsa conditio solvitur

² Denzinger-Bannwart-Umberg, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Freiburg, 1937), 789, 790, 791. Henceforth quoted as *DB*.

³ In 1843 the Master General of the Friars Preachers petitioned Pope Gregory XVI for authorization for the celebration of the Feast of the Conception with an octave, using the proper Mass and in the preface the formula *Et te in Conceptione Immaculata*. In connection with this the following doubt was submitted to the Sacred Congregation of Rites: "Does the ordinance affect those who regard the Blessed Virgin as conceived in Original Sin and those who are bound by oath to follow the doctrine of St. Thomas, in the hypothesis that according to his teaching, the Blessed Virgin had incurred in her soul the hereditary stain?" The response was: "Ad quintum affirmative, et quatenus opus sit, consulendum Sanctissimo pro absolutione." *Pareri dell'Episcopato cattolico, di congregazioni, di università, di personaggi ragguardevoli*, etc., sulla definizione dogmatica dell'immacolato concepimento della B. V. Maria (Rome, 1851-1854), 6, 592ff., 595ff.; X. Le Bachelet, "Immaculée Conception," *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* (Paris, 1922), 7, 1192, remarks that this brought to an honorable end the principal opposition within the Church.

gratia renascendi."⁴ This might be translated roughly to mean: "We do not surrender Mary to the devil by the condition of her birth, because that very condition is undone by the grace of rebirth."⁵ Unfortunately, as Tixeront says,⁶ the answer is ambiguous because Augustine does not say when the "conditio nascendi" was eliminated by the "gratia renascendi." Consequently it is not clear whether he means preservation from Original Sin or delivery from it after beginning life with it. Opinion on the point was divided before the definition in 1854⁷ and has continued so to our day. At any rate, this text of St. Augustine was not utilized in the Bull *Ineffabilis*. The explanation given at the time was that its meaning was not completely evident at first sight, and would require a lot of explanation if included in the Bull.⁸

In the Western Church this difficulty of the universality of sin made itself felt strongly from the very start of the spread of the Feast of England.⁹ It was the underlying principle of St. Bernard's objection from the presence of concupiscence in conception.¹⁰ On the other hand the champions of the privilege in the 12th century defended the privilege in such a way as almost to seem to neglect this difficulty in their defense.¹¹ It was presented in seemingly over-

⁴ *Opus imperfectum contra Julianum*, 4, 22 (PL 45, 1417).

⁵ Literal translation is difficult here, but this seems to render the general sense.

⁶ J. Tixeront, *Histoire des Dogmes* (Paris, 1924), 2, 472, note 4.

⁷ V. Sardi, *La solenne definizione dell'immacolato concepimento di Maria Santissima*. Atti e documenti pubblicati nel cinquantenario della stessa definizione. (Rome, 1904), 1, 863; 2, 58. Cfr. also X. Le Bachelet, *art. cit.* DTC 7, 884.

⁸ V. Sardi, *loc. cit.* There was a similar disagreement in 1854 as to the indirect value of Julian's objection as a witness to the popular belief in the privilege which would constitute the force of the objection.

⁹ X. Le Bachelet, *op. cit.*, 1106.

¹⁰ *Que excepto, de cetero universos respicit ex Adam natos, quod unus humiliter de semetipso ac veraciter confitetur: In iniquitatibus, inquiens, conceptus sum et in peccatis concepit me mater mea. Ep. 172 ad Canon. Lugdun.* (PL 182, 332).

¹¹ Si les docteurs immaculistes du XIIe siècle se préoccupèrent de sauvegarder la première de ces vérités, ils négligèrent l'autre à tel point qu'ils semblent n'y avoir pas songé; ce qui, au siècle suivant, donnera prise à la critique des grands maîtres, X. La Bachelet, *op. cit.*, 1042.

whelming fashion by the great Doctors of the University of Paris in the thirteenth century¹² and at its strongest by St. Thomas Aquinas." If the soul of the Blessed Virgin had never been defiled by original sin, this would derogate from the dignity of Christ as the Redeemer of all mankind. It may be said, therefore, that under Christ, who as universal Saviour needed not to be saved Himself, the Blessed Virgin enjoyed the highest measure of purity. For Christ in no wise contracted original sin, but was holy in His very conception. . . . But the Blessed Virgin, did contract original sin, but was cleansed therefrom before she was born out of the womb."¹³ What added to the difficulty, as presented by St. Thomas, was his insistence that Redemption in the present order of Providence is strictly personal.¹⁴

¹² Alexander of Hales writes: *ideo necesse est, ut quod generatur, in generatione contrahat peccatum et propter hoc B. Virgo non potuit in parentibus sanctificari, immo necesse fuit, quod in generatione sua contraheret peccatum a parentibus. III Sent. q. 9, membr. 2*; St. Bonaventure states: *Et ideo quia hoc spectat ad excellentem dignitatem Christi, quod ipse est omnium Redemptor et Salvator; et quod ipse omnibus aperuit januam; et quod ipse unus pro omnibus mortuus est, nullatenus ab hac generalitate B. Virgo Maria excludenda est, ne, dum matris excellentia ampliatur, Filii gloria minuatur, et sic in illo mater provocetur, quae magis vult Filium extolli et honorari quam seipsam, utpote creatorem creatura. III Sent. D. 3, P. 1, a. 1, q. 2*. St. Albert writes: *Dicimus quod Beata Virgo non fuit sanctificata ante animationem, et qui dicunt oppositum est haeresis condemnata a beato Bernardo in Epistola ad Lugdunenes et a magistris omnibus Parisiensibus. In III Sent. dist. 3, a. 4*. Cf. G. M. Roschini, *Mariologia* 2, 2 (Rome, 1948), 54-57; X. *Le Bachelet, op. cit.*, 1047-1049.

¹³ III, 27, 2 ad 2. Similarly: *Christus enim hoc singulariter in humano genere habet ut redemptione non egeat quia caput nostrum est, sed omnibus convenit redimi per ipsum. Hoc autem esse non posset, si alia anima inveniretur quae nunquam originali macula fuisset infecta; et ideo nec beatae Virgini, nec alicui praeter Christum hoc concessum est." (III Sent. D. 31, a. 1, sol. 2.)*

¹⁴ *Ad tertium dicendum quod hoc est erroneum dicere, quod aliquis sine peccato originali concipiatur praeter Christum; quia ille qui sine peccato originali conciperetur, non indigeret redemptione quae facta est per Christum; et sic Christus non esset omnium hominum redemptor. Nec potest dici, quod non hac redemptione indiguerunt, quia praestitum fuit eis ut sine peccato conciperentur; quia illa gratia facta est parentibus, ut in eis vitium naturae sanaretur, quo manente, sine originali peccato generare non possent; vel ipsi naturae quae sancta est. Oportet autem ponere, quod quilibet personaliter*

Consequently, if in any way the Blessed Virgin had been sanctified before animation by a rational soul, she would never have incurred the stain of original sin, and thus would not have needed the Redemption and salvation which is through Christ. This however is against the universality of Christ's salvation of mankind.¹⁵ Mary, constituted as a person, had to be in need of redemptive action by Christ in order to safeguard Christ's prerogative of Redeemer of all mankind. Sanctification before animation was therefore out of the question.

What of the very instant of animation? St. Bonaventure, Peter of Tarentaise (later Pope Innocent V) and St. Thomas all proposed the case. St. Bonaventure visualized the case of the soul being created, grace infused into it in that instant and in the same instant the soul being infused into the body.¹⁶ He gave the arguments in favor of the privilege, he offered a solution of the objection from the universality of redemption¹⁷ since the grace had its source in Christ. "Others have been raised up after falling. The Virgin Mary was supported in the very act of falling lest she fall." He explained how the *poenalties* can remain in Mary even though original sin be prevented. Nevertheless Bonaventure rejected this view in favor of sanctification after the contraction of original sin as being *communior, rationabilior et securior*. His reason for the "*securior*" was that the common view of the Saints makes an exception for Christ alone from the universality of the doctrine that all have sinned in Adam. Bonaventure states that he personally has not heard anyone claim that Mary was immune from original sin. Hence on account

redemptione Christi indigeat, non solum ratione naturae. Liberari autem a malo, vel a debito absolvi non potest nisi qui debitum incurrit, vel in malum dejectus fuit; et ita non possent omnes fructum dominicae redemptionis in seipsis percipere, nisi omnes debitores nascerentur, et malo subjecti; unde dimissio debitorum et liberatio a malo non potest intelligi, quod aliquis sine debito vel immunis a malo nascatur . . . (In IV Sent., 1. IV, D. 43, q. 1, a. 4, sol. 1, ad 3.) Cfr. also III, 27, 2 ad 4.

¹⁵ III, 27, 2.

¹⁶ In III Sent., D. 3, p. I, a. 1, q. 2.

¹⁷ Fidei enim christianae, ut dicit positio praedicta non repugnat, pro eo quod dicunt ipsam Virginem ab originali peccato liberatam per gratiam, quae quidem pendebat et ortum habebat a fide et capite Christo, sicut aliae gratiae Sanctorum." (ibid.)

of the dignity of Christ as Redeemer of all, Mary is nowise to be excluded from the universality of the principle. He holds, with the common opinion, that the Blessed Virgin was sanctified after the contraction of original sin.¹⁸

Peter of Tarentaise rejects the case as involving one of the two following difficulties: either that Mary would not contract the sin and thus would not need redemption, or that she would contract it and would be sanctified in the same instant. This latter involves the simultaneous presence of sin and grace which is contradictory.¹⁹

St. Thomas has in view the case of sanctification of the soul in the very instant of infusion in such a way that by the grace then infused into it, it would be preserved from incurring original sin. He rejects the case as inconciliable with the universality of Redemption by Christ. Christ alone in the human race does not need redemption. All must be redeemed by Him and this would not be the case if another soul were found which was never infected with original sin. Hence, this was not granted to the Blessed Virgin or anyone except Christ.²⁰

Even today defenders are not lacking of St. Thomas' rejection of the case as proposed. They argue that sanctification in the instant of animation in such a way that the sanctification is prior by nature to the infusion of the soul into the body or to the constitution of the person, is still opposed to redemption by Christ which, in the present economy, is strictly personal.²¹

The elements of the solution of this difficulty were early seen individually but were not successfully co-ordinated. St. Anselm, though not a defender of the privilege, proposed the element that Mary's sanctification, though it took place before the Redemption, was nevertheless bestowed on her in view of the merits of Christ, just as for the Saints of the Old Testament.²² The idea of a "preservative redemption" in the first instant of the creation and infusion

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *In IV Sent.*, 1. 3, D. 3, q. 1, a. 1.

²⁰ *In IV Sent.*, 1. 3, D. 3, q. 1, a. 1, sol. 2.

²¹ *Oportet autem ponere, quod quilibet personaliter redemptione Christi indigeat, non solum ratione naturae. (In IV Sent., 1. IV, D. 43, q. 1, a. 4, sol. 1 ad 3.)*

²² St. Anselm., *Cur Deus homo*, 1. II, c. XVI. (P.L. 158, c. 419 ff., 423).

of the soul, in such a way as to prevent the infection of the soul, though not the defilement of the flesh, was ably presented by St. Bonaventure and rejected by him in favor of the opposite opinion.²³ St. Thomas similarly proposed and rejected sanctification in the first instant: "so that, namely, by the grace then infused, she would be preserved from incurring original sin."²⁴ Peter of Tarentaise also rejected it as unfitting.²⁵ From whatever motive they did it, they did not allow the imminent necessity of contracting original sin in these ways without personally incurring original sin, to suffice as grounds for personal redemption.

These men adhered to sanctification after animation, before birth, at an unknown time, and mentioned that it was believed that this took place "*cito post animationem*."²⁶ Peter of Tarentaise narrowed this interval down to the very day or hour, although not to the very moment of animation.²⁷

Credit for the successful introduction into theology of the position that preservation from the necessity of incurring sin is sufficient grounds for Redemption, was the great merit of William of Ware and, especially, of his famous pupil, John Duns Scotus. Ware and Scotus frankly admitted that Mary needed Redemption, not on account of any sin that was in her, but on account of the sin which would have been in her except for preservation by her Son. "*Maxime indignisset Christo ut redemptore*," says Scotus because she would have contracted original sin on account of her origin from Adam by natural propagation, unless she had been prevented by the grace of the Mediator.²⁸ Her redemption, therefore, was of a special kind, preservative. To the objection that in that instant Mary was first a daughter of Adam before a *persona habens gratiam*, Scotus answered that the priority was only that of nature, not time, and the presence of grace in that instant did not admit of the co-existence of sin or privation of justice. There was no privation of grace in that very

²³ *Loc. cit.*

²⁴ *In IV Sent.*, 1. III, D. 3, q. 1, a. 1, sol. 2.

²⁵ *Loc. cit.*

²⁶ St. Thomas, *Quodlibet*. q. 6, a. 7.; St. Albert the Great, *In III Sent.*, D. 3, a. 5.; Peter of Tarentaise, *loc. cit.* (n. 19); St. Bonaventure, *loc. cit.* q. 3.

²⁷ *Loc. cit.* (n. 19).

²⁸ *In IV Sent.*, 1. III, D. 3, q. 1.

moment but "it would then be there as far as the subject were concerned unless something extrinsic prevented. . . ." ²⁹

Scotus, therefore, by synthesising the elements of the solution: preservative redemption, the *debitum* of sin and priority of nature, accomplished a decisive step in the progress of the dogma. It was the first adequate response which removed the greatest roadblock from the progress of the dogma. Father Marin-Sola says that until they clearly distinguished the *culpa* and *debitum* in original sin, and until they exactly formulated the ideas of preservative redemption and redemption *post contractum peccatum*, the possibility of being conceived without original sin and at the same time redeemed by Christ could not be stated absolutely and without distinction. "To the celebrated Scotus and his school, immortal on this point, undoubtedly belongs the glory of having broached the true solution of the problem by applying to the idea of original sin the distinction of *culpa* and *debitum*, and to the idea of Redemption, the distinction of redemption *post contractam culpam* and of preservative redemption. . . ." ³⁰ "In our opinion these texts would suffice to render immortal the glory of Scotus in the question of the Immaculate Conception." ³¹ "Without wishing to diminish in the least way the incontestable merit of Scotus in this question, we said that the honor of having only broached the true solution of the problem belongs to him. Although he already distinguishes between *culpa* and *debitum*, he does not yet speak clearly enough of the necessity of 'personal or proximate *debitum*', without which it seems almost impossible to safeguard a veritable and legitimate personal redemption." ³²

²⁹ Dico quod cum opposita comparantur ad idem secundum ordinem naturae, non simul ambo insunt, sed tantum alterum inest, reliquum autem quod dicitur prius natura non inest quia in eodem instanti oppositum inest, sed dicitur prius natura quia tunc inesset quantum est ex parte subjecti nisi aliquid extrinsecum impediret. . . . Joannes Duns Scotus, *Opera Omnia*, Paris 1893, (ed. Vivès) t. 14, *In IV Sent.*, 1. III, D. 3, q. 1.

³⁰ *L'Evolution Homogène du Dogme Catholique*, vol. 1, p. 324 Fribourg 1924.

³¹ A notre avis, ces textes suffiraient pour rendre immortelle la gloire de Scot dans cette question de l'Immaculée Conception. *loc. cit.*, p. 324, footnote 1.

³² Sans vouloir diminuer le moins du monde le mérite incontestable de Scot en cette question, nous avons dit qu'il ne lui revient que l'honneur d'avoir amorcé la vraie solution du problème. Quoiqu'il distingue déjà entre *culpa* et

Other theologians before Scotus had had the elements of the solution. St. Thomas applied the notion of *debitum* in regard to the question of death for those living at the end of the world.³³ He applied the distinction of priority of nature in regard to the sanctification of the angels in their creation.³⁴ Anticipation of the merits of Christ is an ordinary doctrine with him. However he did not see his way to the assertion of their application here. Scotus furnished almost no new element. William of Ware and Raymond of Lulle, both doctors of Paris, had championed the privilege before him and substantially furnished the solution to the objections. But Scotus in his synthesis of the elements of solution did it more convincingly, thoroughly and triumphantly, especially in regard to solving the objections. His great contribution was the vindication of the possibility of the privilege. He was very modest in his assertion of the fact. "Which of these three which have been shown to be possible, was done, God knows; if it is not repugnant to the authority of the Church or the authority of Scripture, it seems probable to attribute what is more excellent to Mary."³⁵ It is his eternal glory to have removed the greatest obstacle to the progress of the dogma. From him dates the triumphant course of the reaction in favor of the privilege which was thus freed to pursue its victorious course till the definition of 1854.

In connection with this difficulty, we must ask, how four Doctors of the Church, Bernard, Albert, Bonaventure and Thomas, the lights of their age, should have found themselves arrayed in the main intellectual opposition to the doctrine and feast as then proposed. Of the four, Bonaventure seems to be the only one who explicitly granted probability to the pious belief though he himself firmly rejected it.

St. Bernard in his blistering letter to the Canons of the church

debitum, il ne parle pas encore assez clairement de la nécessité du *debitum personnel ou prochain*, sans lequel il semble presque impossible de sauvegarder une véritable et légitime rédemption personnelle. *Loc. cit.*

³³ *In IV Sent.*, 1. IV, D. 43, q. 1, a. 4, sol. 1 ad 3.

³⁴ I, 62, 3.

³⁵ Quod autem horum trium, quae ostensa sunt esse possibilia, factum sit, Deus novit; si auctoritati Ecclesiae vel auctoritati Ecclesiae vel auctoritati Scripturae non repugnet, videtur probabile quod excellentius est attribuere Mariae. *In IV Sent.* 1. III, D. 3, q. 1.

of Lyons strongly reprehended them for the introduction of the feast of the Conception of Our Lady in their church: *quam ritus Ecclesiae nescit, non probat ratio, non commendat antiqua traditio*. He recognized the feasts of the Assumption and Nativity as received from the church. But why the Conception? Our Lady could not be holy before she existed and she did not exist before she was conceived. There is no room for sanctity *inter amplexus maritales*, so that she would be simultaneously sanctified and conceived. The Holy Ghost has no part in sin, and sin is not lacking where lust is present. Nor could it be on the grounds of virginal conception. This is unheard of in the church and is the prerogative of the Conception of Christ. We may believe that Mary was sanctified in the womb, for it is given to some to be born with sanctity, but not to be conceived thus. That is the privilege of Christ, conceived of the Holy Ghost, for He alone was holy before and after conception.³⁶

All four of the great Doctors held that Mary was sanctified after animation, in virtue of St. Anselm's principle on the holiness of the Mother of God and the general principle of Mariology that a grace granted to others should not be (thought to have been) denied to her.

Many efforts have been made to show that the teaching of the great scholastics was not in opposition with the dogma as later defined. This has been particularly the case with the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas. Justin Antist, O.P., John of St. Thomas, Capponi a Porrecta, Marianus Spada and, in our times, Del Prado, Lumbreras, and Friethoff, have striven to show that nothing St. Thomas wrote is in opposition with the dogma of 1854.³⁷ Father Garrigou-Lagrange has gone a step further in adopting the relatively rare opinion, that St. Thomas, both at the beginning and end of his career held the privilege, though not in between these times.³⁸

³⁶ *Ep. 172 ad Canon. Lugdun.* (P.L. 182, 332.)

³⁷ Seraphinus Capponi a Porrecta, In: *Summa Theol.*, 3, q. 27, a. 2.; Joannes a S. Thoma, *Cursus Theol.* t. 1, diss. praelim., disp. 2, a. 2 (Paris-Tournai-Rome, 1931) p. 265 ff.; Marianus Spada, *Esame critico sulla dottrina dell'Angelico Dottore S. Tommaso d'Aquino circa il peccato originale, relativamente alla Beatissima Vergine Maria*. (Naples 1839); Norbert del Prado, *Divus Thomas et Bulla dogmatica Ineffabilis Deus* (Fribourg 1919); P. Lumbreras, *St. Thomas and the Immaculate Conception* (Notre Dame, 1923); C. Friethoff, "Quomodo caro B. M. Virginis in originali concepta fuerit." *Angelicum* 10 (1933), 321-334.

³⁸ *The Mother of the Saviour* (Dublin 1948) 66-71.

However, the early commentators of St. Thomas before the sixteenth century, such as Capreolus, Torquemada, St. Antonine, Sylvester of Ferrara, and Cajetan considered St. Thomas unfavorable to the privilege.³⁹

In regard to St. Bonaventure, the Quaracchi editors wrote: "The disciples of St. Bonaventure repeated his doctrine, and up to now we have not encountered a single one of our theologians of Paris in the thirteenth century who had accepted or defended the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception."⁴⁰

Even after Scotus, it was only at the end of the fourteenth century that the opinion in favor of the privilege became the common opinion among the Franciscans.⁴¹ It was the same with the Augustinians and Carmelites in the fourteenth century. In the first half of the century the objections of the great Masters of Paris prevailed. However the second half century witnessed the triumph of the privilege. By the end of the century the Premonstratensians, Trinitarians, Servites, many Benedictines, Cistercians, and Carthusians, were in favor of the privilege.

On the whole, the Dominicans remained faithful to the teaching of the Masters of Paris during the fourteenth century. In regard to this Father Mortier wrote: "The fact is that the majority of the Masters of the Order in the fourteenth century, and some of them afterwards, claimed to follow the doctrine of St. Thomas in refusing to the Holy Virgin the privilege of the Immaculate Conception."⁴²

Nevertheless, at the time of the definition in 1854, nothing was said in the Bull *Ineffabilis* of the opposition of the great Doctors of the thirteenth century, because of the disagreement on the point as to whether they were in opposition to the belief as defined by Pius IX.

³⁹ "Nam omnes antiqui habuerunt illum ut non faventem immaculatae conceptioni, sicut Aegidius Romanus, Deza, Petrus de Tarentasia, Paludanus, Ioannes de Neapoli, Ioannes de Polliaco, Hervaeus Natalis, Capreolus, de Turrecremata, S. Antoninus, Ferrariensis, Caietanus, in opusc. de Conceptione B.V.M. . . "Merkelbach, *Mariologia*, p. 128.

⁴⁰ *Questiones disputatae de immaculata conceptione beatæ Mariæ Virginis*. (Quaracchi, 1904) praefatio, p. XI.

⁴¹ X. Le Bachelet, *op. cit.*, 1082.

⁴² *Histoire de maîtres généraux de l'ordre des frères prêcheurs*. 3, 67, note 2, cited by Le Bachelet *op. cit.* 1078.

Our difficulty is to see how under God's Providence these great Saints, Doctors of the church and great servants of Mary, unsurpassed in their devotion to her, could fulfill the role they did.

The explanation of this has some obvious factors. In their time the feast was not predominant. They speak of it as tolerated. It was not observed by the Church of Rome till about 1330. In Paris, in the preceding century, the Bishop, Maurice de Sully, had suppressed the feast of the Conception.⁴³ Outside of England and Normandy it had not attained great prominence in the West. Consequently, St. Bernard and the Doctors of Paris in the thirteenth century were but following the guidance and custom of the Church as they knew it at the time, and they were cautious in regard to the new belief which lacked sufficient authoritative support and was open to many objections. Secondly, they did not have sufficient access to the Patristic doctrine of the Eastern Church Fathers on the question. Neither did they know the history of the belief and feast in the East. Had they been better acquainted with the Oriental tradition in the matter and had they lived later when the feast and belief did become prevalent in the West, it seems reasonable to think that they would have written differently in regard to the feast and the belief, and that, irrespective of whether they would have had anything to retract or not in regard to the definition of Pius IX.

A third point can well be argued, namely, that their opposition at the time was but one of the results of the Holy Spirit working through the analogy of Faith to fit the privilege of Mary into the general framework of the dogmas of Redemption and Original Sin. They contributed indirectly to the progress of the dogma by thus formulating the need of personal redemption in its most stringent form and by clarifying the doctrine of original sin and concupiscence. After all, if we might be permitted to use a rather left-handed compliment, the promoter of the Faith has an important role to fulfill in the canonization of a Saint. However, behind all the explanation that can be given, there still lies the obscurity of God's Providence which did not yet deign to enlighten them on the privilege of Mary.

We must also remember the modest attitude both of those who

⁴³ X. Le Bachelet, *op. cit.*, 1059.

opposed the belief in the thirteenth century and those who championed it at the beginning of the of the fourteenth.

It must be remembered, too, that the opposition was not universal in the schools of Europe at the time. In fact it might be said to have been, in a sense, local, that is, restricted to the University of Paris and its field of influence, great though it was in the Europe of that time.

Ultimately however it was the progress in the attitude of the Church which was the real key to the situation.

The feast which had been established in many places in England before the Norman Conquest in 1066, had suffered an eclipse, but was soon re-established in many places, through the powerful efforts of Anselm the younger, nephew of St. Anselm, with the help of Osbert of Clare and Eadmer. The feast had been instituted in many places likewise on the Continent.⁴⁴ This applied particularly to Normandy and neighboring regions, but extended beyond. By the second quarter of the twelfth century it had reached Lyons. St. Bernard had followed this movement with anxiety, but so far had refrained from action out of respect for the simple piety of the people. But in 1138 he judged the time had come for action, and he wrote his above mentioned letter.

During the twelfth century the belief in the privilege had made progress but by no means had become common or even preponderant. However, little by little it was gaining ground. The feast was uncontestedly celebrated in many places, as admitted by adversaries at the time.⁴⁵ In 1154 a writer in France stated that the Christian people celebrated it in France almost universally⁴⁶ and the assertion is supported by the evidence of missals and other liturgical documents of the time.⁴⁷ Not even in Lyons was the influence of St. Bernard able to arrest the progress of the feast.⁴⁸ Still, St. Bonaventure could sincerely state that in his own milieu of the University of Paris he had never with his own ears heard sustained that the Virgin Mary was immune from original sin. At that time, the second

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 1006 & 1010.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 1033.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 1034.

half of the thirteenth century, the churches celebrating the feast were, absolutely speaking, numerous but less in number than those not celebrating it.⁴⁹ There was also a notable increase between the death of St. Thomas and the end of the century. It was even established or reintroduced in Notre Dame de Paris as the result of a legacy left by Bishop Renaud de Homblonière, a Norman, who died in 1288. Certainly the Franciscans were celebrating it in Paris in 1286.

Nevertheless, during the fourteenth century the spread of the Feast made such progress that in the fifteenth century, on the eve of the Council of Basel, it was practically universal in the West. Among the Friars Minor, belief in the privilege was unanimous by the end of the fourteenth, and the religious orders in general, had rallied to the Feast. In view of this rapid development, it is not hard to appreciate the stand of St. Bernard and the great scholastics of the thirteenth century. Their attitude was a faithful reflection of the magisterium at the time. In the progress of this, as of other Marian dogmas, it was by the *via affectiva* that the driving force of progress made itself felt most. At the time of the Council of Basel, John of Segovia could invoke in his favor the support "of almost the whole world," and say that the denial of the privilege had long since become so disagreeable to the Christian people that they would not stand for it.⁵⁰

God chooses his own instruments and his own good time in the unfolding of the message of the revealed deposit. St. Bernard and the great Doctors of the thirteenth century were the glory of their age, but they did not have to be so in all fields of endeavor. God has reserved some glory for others as well.

II

The second great difficulty in the development of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was the confusion in regard to the object of the belief and cult. This difficulty was mainly overcome in the year 1661 by the authoritative intervention of Pope Alexander VII. The Bull *Sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum* fixed as the object of the

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 1065.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 1111.

cult the belief that the soul of the B.V.M., from the first instant of its creation and infusion into the body, was by a special grace and special privilege of God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Redeemer of the human race, fully preserved from the stain of original sin.⁵¹ It enjoined that the feast was to be celebrated in this sense, and censures were enacted against those who should infringe on its provisions.

A last change, at the very time of the definition in 1854, was made at the suggestion of the Bishop of Ugento, Francesco Bruni. This change substituted the person of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for the previous expression "soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary." The suggestion read: *de persona, non de sola anima*. This suggestion was supported by Cardinal Joseph Pecci and was retained in the definition itself.⁵²

Before this definitive settlement was reached there was a long period of groping toward the truth, of eliminating successively the various elements of confusion which were bound up with the kernel of true doctrine.

First, in chronological order, was the complexity of the object of the feast when it first arose. This was due to the influence of the Protoevangelium of James which probably gave rise to the feast. This apocryphal writing featured a parallel to the Conception of St. John the Baptist. It included a miraculous conception in the sterile womb of St. Anne, following an angelic annunciation of the event.

This feast went beyond the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which was in vogue by the middle of the sixth century, and seems to have been derived from it. The new feast began about a century later, toward the end of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century. The earliest title was "The Feast of the Conception of Anne," which occurs in the Canon of St.

⁵¹ Nos . . . Constitutiones et Decreta . . . edita in favorem sententiae asserentis animam beatæ Mariæ Virginis in sui creatione et in corpus infusione, Spiritus Sancti gratia donatam, et a peccato originali præservatam fuisse, nec non et in favorem festi et cultus Conceptionis eiusdem Virginis Deiparæ, secundum piam istam sententiam, ut præfertur, exhibiti, innovamus, et sub censuris et poenis in eisdem Constitutionibus contentis, observari mandamus. Alexander VII, Const. *Sollicitudo omnium Ecclesiarum*, VIII Decembris 1661.

⁵² Sardi, *op. cit.*, t. II, 38, 87, 243, 312.

Andrew of Crete (660?-740)⁵³: *In Conceptionem sanctae ac Dei aviae Annae*. Its date was the 9th of December. The title suggests that the object of the feast was the active conception of the parents of Our Lady in the normal way of human generation. Any attempt to add to the legend the element of a virginal conception without the intervention of St. Joachim was vigorously rejected by the Greek Fathers from the beginning, and they celebrated explicitly the conception on the part of both spouses. Nevertheless it would be false to state, as is so often done, that the title of the feast was exclusively that of the Conception of Anne. This title has indeed prevailed in the modern editions of the liturgical books, but the title "Feast of the Conception of the Mother of God" was frequent during the whole of the Middle Ages, not only in Greek territories but in the Slavic countries as well.⁵⁴ As a matter of fact, the object of the feast was not the active conception exclusively or passive conception exclusively. The object was complex, as can be solidly proven from the titles of the feast in the liturgical books of the time, as well as from the content of the liturgical and homiletic texts connected with the feast.⁵⁵ This object comprised the annunciation of the conception made by the angel, the miracle of conception in a sterile womb, and the passive conception of the future Mother of God. In fact, in the liturgical texts and in the sermons for the Feast, it is the coming into existence of the future Mother of God which receives much more prominence than the angelic annunciation of the miraculous conception in a sterile womb.⁵⁶

The legendary element of the annunciation undoubtedly determined the introduction of the solemnity into the liturgical cycle. The motive of this was simply to complete the cycle of Marian Feasts, by including her conception. The Protoevangelium of James furnished the theme of the angelic annunciation, and the other two elements fell naturally into place. However, it was the third element, the passive conception of the future Mother of God, which, as a

⁵³ P.G. 98, 1305-1316.

⁵⁴ Jugie M., *L'Immaculée Conception dans L'Ecriture Sainte et dans la Tradition Orientale*. (Rome 1952) 139.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 140.

matter of fact, always had the principal place in the minds of the poets and orators of the Eastern Church. The feast furnished them with an occasion to manifest their belief in the perpetual holiness of Mary as the *panagia*, the all-holy one. In fact it really was the Virgin Immaculate, exempt from all stain of sin from the first instant of her existence, whose praises they sing. Jugie says: "Such was the dogmatic role of the Conception in the Orient. It was born and developed, not under the influence of theological preoccupations, nor in the midst of struggles and controversies, as happened in the West. It is a phenomenon of Marian piety blossoming in its own good time and very naturally giving occasion to manifestations of the dogmatic order."⁵⁷ There never was any controversy over the feast during the Byzantine period; and, although it resembled the feast of St. John the Baptist in its origin and from the liturgical point of view; from the theological point of view, as regards its principal object and the doctrinal developments to which it gave rise, it differs as much as the Mother of God differs from the Mother of the Precursor.

What is remarkable about it, is that in referring to the Conception, whether in the liturgical titles themselves or in sermons, the expression "immaculate" or its equivalent is often included and joined with the word conception.⁵⁸ In fact, from the very beginning the Greek feast was called the annunciation by an angel from God to Joachim and Anne of the conception of the Mother of God.⁵⁹

What is even more important, and what is not usually realized, is that Greek theology in the centuries before the feast, and even before the powerful impetus to Marian devotion from the Council of Ephesus, showed wide and explicit acquaintance with the doctrine of original sin, though they never *ex professo* placed the question of what constitutes its essence. Jugie says: "Not only the writers after the Council of Ephesus, but even the Fathers anterior to it, with the exception of Theodore of Mopsuestia and perhaps of Theodoret, often asserted with sufficient clarity the state of fallen nature trans-

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁵⁸ Jugie, M., "Immaculée Conception dans l'Eglise Grecque après la Conscience d'Ephèse", in: *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* (Paris, 1922) 7, 958.

⁵⁹ Jugie, M., *L'Immaculée Conception dans L'Ecriture Sainte et dans la Tradition Orientale.*, 138.

mitted by Adam the sinner to his descendants and the opposition of that state to the primitive divine plan for the human race."⁶⁰ It is even false to say that the Greek Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries did not employ our present terminology in speaking of original sin.⁶¹ St. John Chrysostom tells how the descendants of Adam must undergo a double death, the death of the soul which is sin and the death of the body.⁶² The point is put beyond issue by the attitude of the Eastern Church at the time of Pelagianism. It was no less prompt than the West in rejecting the heresy, v.g., at the Synod of Diospolis in Palestine in 415, which obliged Pelagius to confess that Adam was created immortal, that his sin was harmful to all humanity, and that newly born children find themselves in the same state as Adam after the Fall. Ephesus excommunicated and deposed those who shared the doctrines of Celestius the Pelagian. Pope Celestine congratulated even Nestorius on holding the correct doctrine on original sin. After Ephesus, mention of original sin occurs in practically all the theological works of the Byzantine writers.⁶³ In the century when the feast arose, the seventh, the synod in Trullo gave its official approbation to the canonical collection of the African Councils, thus incorporating into Byzantine law the two first canons of the Second Council of Mileve; these were repeated in the synod of Carthage in 418. The first of these asserts the primitive immortality of man, and the second, the need of baptism by the newly born on account of the sin of Adam "*ut in eis mundetur quod generatione contraxerunt.*"⁶⁴

In fact it is especially when speaking of the Blessed Virgin that they mention original sin. There is hardly a homily on the Annunciation that does not introduce the contrast between the state of original justice and the state of the Fall. What is more, they develop the role of Mary as the New Eve, bringing about the effects of the Redemption, wiping out the sin of Adam, lifting the primitive curse, reforming and re-establishing our nature in its primitive state.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Jugie, *art. cit.* in DTC, 7, 896.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 897.

⁶⁴ *DB* 101-102.

⁶⁵ Jugie, *art. cit.* in DTC, 7, 897.

The development of the feast in the Orient was, as it were, in a straight line to the sanctity of the first beginnings of the Mother of God, that is, her creation, and her conception, without bothering about any difficulties in the way. There was no controversy till the infiltrations of Protestantism into the East.

The definition of the divine Maternity at Ephesus had given a powerful impetus to devotion to the all-holy Mother of God, and, without further precision or difficulty, they made explicit the all-holiness of Mary as extending to the first instant of her existence.

In the West, from the very beginning difficulties barred the way to a clear-cut determination of the object of the feast and belief. When Scholasticism arose with its tremendous veneration for St. Augustine, the feast had to face a very difficult hurdle in the Augustinian doctrine on concupiscence. According to this doctrine, as a result of original sin, the marriage act cannot take place without the accompaniment of inordinate concupiscence, and it is this actual inordinate concupiscence which stains and infects the offspring with original sin. Now, since the Blessed Virgin was born of normal wedlock, this difficulty immediately presented itself to the Theologians of the Middle Ages: how the conception of Mary could be holy when it was thus necessarily vitiated by the inordinateness of concupiscence in the parental act.

Scholasticism, with its striving for precision of terms, had first to distinguish between the active conception on the part of the parents and passive conception on the part of the child; then between the passive conception of the flesh and the consummated conception when the human soul was infused. The dark shadow of the Augustinian doctrine on concupiscence, as causing the transmission of original sin, and as constituting along with its guilt the very essence of original sin, overhung all these distinctions.

The presence of concupiscence in the conjugal act of the parents of Mary forced the defenders of the privilege to distinguish between the sin as pertaining to the act of the parents, and the result of their act, the offspring, which was holy.⁶⁶ When pushed back a step further by the argument that the product of such sinful concupiscence

⁶⁶ Eadmer, "Tractatus de conceptione sanctae Mariae", *P.L.* 159, 305.

could not help being similarly infected, the defenders tried various answers.

One solution was to admit the Augustinian principle and take the view that, although the conception at that time was not truly holy, still it was the coming into existence of her who was later to be the Mother of the Redeemer; the celebration of the feast could, then be defended on the score of being thus the beginning of Redemption.⁶⁷

Others admitted the general principle, but sought a solution in a miraculous absence of actual concupiscence in the particular act of generation from which originated the flesh of Mary.⁶⁸ They asserted that the marital act in that case was holy and meritorious.

A radical but bizarre theory was that which had recourse to the theory of the *particula sana*. According to this theory, Christ's exemption from original sin was explained by the fact that, although all Adam's descendants were actually contained in him in germinal form, the flesh to which the Word was united was not comprised in the corruption which original sin involved for the whole mass of human nature contained in Adam. That flesh was preserved from the contagion and corruption of sin. From the first generation to the moment when the Word assumed flesh, it remained immune from all sin and was transmitted pure. Thus, never having been subjected to sin, it was not freed but free; "*et ideo a peccato non liberata sed libera.*"⁶⁹

Some directly attacked the validity of the Augustinian principle. A treatise under the name of Abelard, contested the principle that, in the present order, the generative act must be necessarily sinful. He reproached St. Bernard and the other defenders of that view with debasing excessively the act which is the means of the conservation of the human race. The argument holds *a fortiori*, when the act is accomplished by two Saints for the purpose of bringing into the world her who was to be the Mother of the Saviour. Is it even certain that there was carnal lust in that act? What is to prevent us from believing that God by a special privilege allowed them to generate that holy body without any stain of carnal lust?⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Le Bachelet, *op. cit.*, 1009.

⁶⁸ *Loc. Cit.*, 1018.

⁶⁹ *Loc. Cit.*, 1019.

⁷⁰ *Loc. Cit.*, 1018.

This beginning of a healthy reaction to the darker side of Augustinianism unfortunately did not have much follow-up at the time and has had to wait almost to our own day to bear fruit.

In dealing with this difficulty the great scholastics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries made many valuable contributions toward the clarification of the dogma, even when they were not in favor of the doctrine. They eliminated as bizarre the theory that explained the purity of Christ's conception (and Mary's) on the basis of the *particula sana*, transmitted, unsullied by the corruption of original sin, from generation to generation. St. Thomas conceded that the act was meritorious on the part of the parents of Mary, but correctly pointed out and insisted upon the fact that it was not the actual inordination of concupiscence, but habitual concupiscence, the inordinate state of human nature, which is responsible for the transmission of original sin. This state is not remedied by the sanctification of Baptism which is purely personal, nor by any advance in personal holiness, no matter how great.⁷¹

The act of generation proceeds from the parents, not in so far as they have been personally sanctified, but in so far as they are the natural principle of generation of a fallen nature and they inevitably transmit the state of sin until the sin of nature is healed as to the nature and that will not be till the consummation of the world. Consequently, St. Thomas and most of the great theologians of the University of Paris denied that the conception of the flesh of Mary was holy, and excused the celebration of the Feast on the ground that its object was not the conception of the flesh of Mary, but the

⁷¹ Ad decimum sextum dicendum, quod libido nominat inordinatam concupiscentiam actualem. Dictum est autem supra quod materiale in originali peccato est concupiscentia habitualis, quae provenit ex hoc quod ratio non habet virtutem totaliter inferiores refrenandi. Sic ergo libido actualis quae est in coitu, est signum concupiscentiae habitualis, quae materialiter se habet in originali peccato. Causa autem quod aliquid transmittat originale peccatum in prolem, est id quod remanet in eo de peccato originali, etiam post baptismum, ut dictum est, in solutione ad III et VII arg., scilicet concupiscentia, vel fomes. Sic enim patet quod libido actualis non est causa quod transmittatur originale peccatum sed signum causae. Unde si miraculose fieret ut actualis libido totaliter removeretur, coitu manente, tamen nihilominus proles traheret peccatum originale. Unde Augustinus cum dixit quod libido transmittit peccatum, posuit signum pro signato . . . *De Malo*, q. 4, a. 6, ad 16.

sanctification of her soul after its creation and infusion. St. Thomas wrote in the *Compendium Theologiae* in the last years of his life: "She was immune not only from actual sin but also from original sin, cleansed by a special privilege. It was of course necessary that she be conceived with original sin, in as much as she was conceived by the commingling of both sexes. For that privilege was reserved to her alone, namely, that a Virgin should conceive the Son of God. Now the commingling of the sexes, which cannot be without lust after the sin of our first parents, transmits original sin to the offspring. . . . It must therefore be held that she was conceived with original sin, but was in some special way cleansed from it. Some indeed are cleansed from original sin after their birth from the womb, as those who are sanctified in baptism. Some, however, we read, have been sanctified even in the womb of their mother by a certain privilege of grace; . . . but what was granted to the precursor of Christ and to the Prophet, should not be thought to have been denied to His Mother: and therefore, she is believed to have been sanctified in the womb, namely, before she was born from the womb. However, such a sanctification did not precede the infusion of the soul. For thus she would never have been subject to original sin, and would not have needed redemption, for the subject of sin can only be a rational creature. Likewise the grace of sanctification is radicated first in the soul, and cannot reach the body except through the soul. Hence it is to be believed that she was sanctified after the infusion of the soul."⁷²

Hence, he also wrote in the *Questiones quodlibetales*: "Whence that celebration is not to be referred to the conception by reason of the conception, but rather by reason of the sanctification. Thus the aforesaid conception is not to be celebrated on the grounds that she was conceived without original sin."⁷³

In both of these places (Comp. & Quodl.), St. Thomas explained the special excellence and privilege of Mary's sanctification over that of other saints, even those sanctified in the womb, on the basis that the gift of grace was more abundant, to the extent that her whole life was rendered immune from all actual sin, both mortal and venial.

⁷² *Compendium Theologiae*, c. 224.

⁷³ Quodlibet. VI, a. 7.

Another gain was the adoption by St. Thomas and Scotus, of St. Anselm's view of original sin as the privation of Original Justice, in preference to the view of Peter Lombard which followed the line of St. Augustine, placing the essence of it in concupiscence.⁷⁴ Scotus rejected any *qualitas morbida* in the flesh as the cause of original sin in the soul, and explained the transmission of original sin on this basis: the person constituted of body and soul is a natural son of Adam, and therefore deprived of original justice which God had given to all men as their inheritance in Adam. Mary, as a natural daughter of Adam, by the ordinary way of generation should likewise have been deprived of God's grace, but, by a special privilege, God made an exception for her and gave her grace which was equivalent to that justice in the divine acceptance, in the first instant of her constitution as a person.⁷⁵

Even in the hypothesis of the other view on original sin, Scotus emphasized that the habitual state of concupiscence is not a necessary cause of original sin, because, for example, it does not re-infect the soul after Baptism. Hence, we can see the possibility of God infusing grace in the first instant of the creation and union of the soul with the body, thus preventing this effect in the case of Mary. "For just as, after the first instant of Baptism, the infection of the body, contracted by propagation, could remain with grace in the cleansed soul, so can it be in the first instant, if God then created grace in the soul of Mary."⁷⁶

Scotus vindicated this possibility even for the hypothesis of the

⁷⁴ Originale peccatum dicitur fomes peccati, scilicet concupiscentia, vel concupiscibilis quae dicitur lex membrorum sive languor naturae, sive tyrannus qui est in membris nostris, sive lex carnis. P. Lombard, *II Sent.*, D. XXX.; St. Augustine, *De pecc. mer. et rem.*, 1. 1, c. 20; 1. 2, c. 4.; Cfr. Tixeront, *Hist. des dogmes*, 2, 472 ff

⁷⁵ Secundum istam viam, quod anima contrahit mediante carne; non ita quod caro, quasi per qualitatem quamdam causatam in ea, causet istud peccatum originale sed ex hoc quod caro concupiscibiliter seminatur, et ex ipsa formatur corpus organicum, cui infunditur anima constituens personam, quae est filius Adae. Ista ergo persona, quia naturalis filius Adae, ideo debitor est iustitiae originalis, datae a Deo ipsi Adae pro omnibus filiis: et caret ea: ergo habet peccatum originale . . . *In IV Sent.*, 1. II, D. XXX-XXXII, a. 3, (Garcia ed.) p. 773.; Cfr. also *In IV Sent.*, 1. III, D. 3, q. 1.

⁷⁶ *In IV Sent.*, 1. III, D. 3, q. 1.

creation and infusion of a rational soul immediately at formation of the embryo.⁷⁷ This point never has been settled philosophically, biologically, or theologically, and the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception or the fixing of the feast on the 8th of December, nine months before the feast of the Nativity on the 8th of September, never had any intention of settling this dispute, or of accurately determining the time of either event, as is clear from the discussions at the time of the definition in 1854.⁷⁸

The doctrine of the Council of Trent on the relation between concupiscence and Original Sin helped indirectly to eliminate forever the objection from concupiscence to the Immaculate Conception. By stating that the Church has never understood habitual concupiscence to be truly and properly a sin in the baptized,⁷⁹ it contributed powerfully toward effecting this. By limiting the statement to the baptized, Trent left liberty to the Augustinian school to consider concupiscence as sin the unbaptized, though the Council did not thereby imply that it was, since its policy was not to interfere with differences of opinion between Catholic schools of thought.

It took the Church a long time to eliminate all the elements of confusion in regard to the object of cult in the Immaculate Conception. However, we can say that by the time of St. Thomas and Scotus the difficulty of actual concupiscence has largely been eliminated. It took about the same time to establish that the object of belief was the consummated passive conception: that is, when the rational soul becomes present. It took longer to overcome the position that the object of the feast was the sanctification rather than the passive conception itself. In the fourteenth century, those who held that the object was the sanctified conception itself became much more numerous, particularly in the latter half of the century. In the following century, in 1482, by the Bull *Grave nimis*, Pope Sixtus IV intervened, and declared the views of those who pretended to apply only to the spiritual conception or sanctification of the glorious Virgin, the feast celebrated by the Roman Church, to be false and erroneous. By the sixteenth century, no doubt existed among the

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Sardi, *op. cit.*, t. 2, pp. 33, 87, 242-245, 292, 312.

⁷⁹ *DB* 792.

defenders of the privilege as to its object. They meant Mary in the first instant of her existence as possessing perfect interior sanctity. They regarded the 8th of December as an anticipation of the time of animation by a rational soul, according to the intention of the Church.⁸⁰

There was some difficulty in regard to a decree of the Holy Office under Urban VIII in 1644, according to which it was not permitted to speak of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, but only of the Conception of the Immaculate Virgin. However, it was recognized commonly that this decree had neither been approved nor confirmed by the Pontifical authority.⁸¹ This was soon remedied by the advent of Alexander VII in 1655. He instructed the Master of the Sacred Palace not to disturb those authors who used in their writings the term "Immaculate Conception," and authorized the printing of a work using this title. The King of Spain in 1659 sent a special envoy to the Pope to seek not a formal definition of the privilege, but a declaration which would fix in a clear and authentic way the object of the cult as referring to the very conception of Mary. This was done in the constitution "*Sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum*" of the 8th of December, 1661: "We renew the constitutions and decrees published by our predecessors, notably Paul V and Gregory XV, in favor of the belief holding that the soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the moment of its creation and infusion into the body, was adorned with the grace of the Holy Spirit and preserved from original sin, and in favor of the cult and of the feast which are celebrated, conformably to that pious belief, in honor of the Conception of the same Virgin Mother of God."⁸²

III

The third and last difficulty concerns the problem of how the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is contained in the deposit of public Revelation closed with the death of the last Apostle. Though the most important of all, it was the last one to attract the attention of the theologians and call forth their serious investigation. This is

⁸⁰ Le Bachelet, *op. cit.*, 1162.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1174.

⁸² *DB* 1100.

natural in the progress of a dogma from the implicit to the explicit stage. When it became explicit, it passed through the stages of being considered a pious opinion or belief, then of controversy and reaction, till it reached the stage of the common consent of the Faithful and of the universality of the Feast as of obligation; whereupon the question of definability arose, and petitions for definition from bishops and the crowned heads of Europe became frequent. This brought to the fore the question of the inclusion of the privilege in the revealed deposit.

The question of definition first came up at the Council of Basel in 1439. It was opposed by Torquemada and championed by John of Segovia, but was only carried through to a definition at a time when the Council was illegitimate. Only one Cardinal, seven bishops, and three hundred priests comprised the Council at the time of the definition. In the preliminary discussions not much was done on the question of its inclusion in Revelation and the decree limited itself to declaring that the privilege was consonant with Ecclesiastical worship, the Catholic Faith, right reason, and Sacred Scripture.⁸³

At the 5th Council of the Lateran, 1512-1517, Pope Leo X proposed to have the problem discussed. He asked Cardinal Cajetan to set forth his views on the problem: this was done in the *Tractatus de conceptione beatae Mariae Virginis*.⁸⁴ Cajetan's strongly adverse verdict discouraged Leo X from pursuing the project.

At the Council of Trent it was urged that the question of the Immaculate Conception should be decided on account of the doctrine to be defined on Original Sin. Yet, when the decree on original sin came up for examination by the members of the Council, more than two-thirds were of the opinion that the Blessed Virgin should not be included in the decree. It was in conformity with this vote that the explanation was added after the canons, declaring that it did not enter into the intention of the Council to include the Blessed Virgin in the scope of the decree, and the observation of the constitutions of Sixtus IV was renewed. The Fathers thus deliberately wished to refrain from any definition, and technically left the question in its previous state. The mind, however, of the great majority

⁸³ Le Bachelet, *op. cit.*, 1113.

⁸⁴ Cajetan, *Opuscula Omnia* (Lyons 1581) 2, 137-142.

in support of the declaration was positive belief in the privilege of Mary. This is established from the record of the debates on the matter.⁸⁵ It is this that explains the version of Trent's action given by the Bull *Ineffabilis*, namely, that the Fathers of Trent thereby insinuated the exemption of Mary from original sin, and that they gave to understand thereby that nothing can rightly be drawn from Scripture, Tradition or the authority of the Fathers which is in any way opposed to that prerogative of Mary.⁸⁶

In the seventeenth century, the question of definability became more urgent and with it that of the revealed character of the doctrine. The opposition of writers of rigorist tendency, such as, Widenfelt and Muratori, to the vow of martyrdom in defense of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception occasioned discussion of the same problem, since the point of their objection was that it is not licit to expose one's life for a truth that is not of Faith.

Theological opinion at the time was divided on the question of the revealed character of the Immaculate Conception. Some outstanding names were against definability as a revealed truth, but the majority of the defenders of the belief thought it could be defined as of Faith.⁸⁷ Bellarmine's celebrated *Votum* in 1617 was in favor of a definition of the privilege as a pious and holy belief. His sentiment seems by inference to have been unfavorable to the revealed character of the doctrine, in so far as he denied that the opposite opinion could be defined as heretical.⁸⁸ In the preceding century, Melchior Cano was of the opinion that it could not be found in the literal and true sense of the Scriptures. Maldonatus in connection with his difficulties with the University of Paris in 1574-1575 over the Immaculate Conception, wrote that it did not appear to him to be revealed either immediately or mediately; explicitly or implicitly.⁸⁹

Pope Gregory XV, in 1617, and Urban VIII,⁹⁰ in 1623, said that

⁸⁵ Richard, P., "Concile de Trente", in: Hefele-Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles*, (Paris 1930) t. IX, 290-301; Le Bachelet, *op. cit.*, 1168.

⁸⁶ Le Bachelet, *op. cit.* 1168.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1154.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1153.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Del Prado, *op. cit.*, 382; Le Bachelet, *op. cit.* 1173.

they could not yet see their way clear to a definition. By way of contrast, Suarez, Toletus, and Vasquez all considered the privilege to be definable as of Faith.⁹¹

The definitive triumph of the feast as being universally of obligation took place in 1708 under Clement XI, after the determination of the object of the feast in 1661. This step brought definition much nearer. The defenders of the privilege in the eighteenth century, such as, St. Alphonsus Liguori, relied on the universality of the Feast as of precept and on the common consent of the faithful as their criterion of its certitude and definability.⁹² This common consent of the faithful was growing steadily toward unanimity. When Pius IX came to the throne in 1846 and decided to move toward a definition, he assured himself of the common consent of the pastors and faithful by carrying out the so-called council by letter, a plan suggested a hundred years before by St. Leonard of Port Maurice and Cardinal Imperiali,⁹³ and repeated a hundred years later by Pius XII. The encyclical *Ubi primum* of February 2, 1849, asked to know the mind of the clergy and people in regard to the Immaculate Conception, and to what extent they wished to see the question settled, and especially what the episcopate thought and desired on the point. Out of 603 Bishops who replied, only 56 or 57 were not in favor of a dogmatic definition.⁹⁴ About ten withheld judgment. Another ten were against a direct definition with proscription of the opposite opinion. Twenty-four held back on the question of opportunity. Only four or five were frankly opposed to a dogmatic definition. Thus was realized what Pius XII was to call the concordant teaching of the Ordinary Magisterium and the concordant belief of the faithful.⁹⁵ The question of Pius XII was more pointed than that of Pius IX, since it expressly inquired as to the definability as of Faith, whereas that of Pius IX touched this in general, by asking

⁹¹ Suarez, F., *Opera Omnia*, (Paris 1860) 19, 47.; Toletus, *Sum. Theol.*, III, q. 27, a. 2, concl. 2.; Vasquez, G., *In III part.*, t. II, disp. 117, c. 14.

⁹² St. Alphonsus Liguori, *Opere Ascetiche*, (Rome 1937) vol. 7, "Le Glorie di Maria", 38.

⁹³ Le Bachelet, *op. cit.*, 1186 & 1198.

⁹⁴ "Narratio Actorum SS. Domini nostri Pii Papae IX" in: Sardi, *op. cit.*, t. II, p. 173.

⁹⁵ AAS, 42 (1950), 756.

what they considered the best manner of proclaiming the supreme decision as solemnly as possible.

In this way, as later in 1946 in regard to the Assumption, there was provided the proximate criterion of definability, and the usual procedure for definition could be instituted and carried out. The fact that the privilege was contained in Revelation was guaranteed by the universality of the feast as of precept and by the concordant belief of pastors and faithful.

What was the force and logic of this argument? It is a difficult thing to explain rationally the validity of the inference from the common belief of pastors and faithful, and, from the universality of the feast of obligation to the fact of their inclusion in the primitive deposit of Revelation.

The general lines of the argument are clear, namely, the assistance of the Holy Ghost in guarding and explaining the deposit of Faith. Surely the precept of the feast, as actually carried out, is a profession of Faith by the universal Church, and similarly the devotions of the faithful under the direction of the Ordinary Magisterium. But what gives pause for thought is the example of feasts, such as the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin in the temple, which, according to Benedict XIV in his *De servorum Dei Beatificatione*,⁹⁶ by no means involves the revealed character of the fact of the historic presentation. Now of course the feast of the Presentation of Our Lady is not a universal feast of obligation, but supposing that it were, wherein lies the difference between it and the feast of the Immaculate Conception as regards Revelation? It would seem that the solution must be sought in the sense in which the Immaculate Conception is being celebrated by the Church and the implications of that sense. Now according to the rules applying to the practice of the Church as a criterion for finding revealed truths in the Magisterium of the Church, the practice must be universal and it must have a necessary connection with a revealed truth.⁹⁷ As to the Immaculate Conception, the feast was universal, and the object officially determined by the Church was Mary's full preservation by

⁹⁶ Benedict XIV, *De servorum Dei beatificatione*, lib. 1, cap. 43, n. 13. Cited in Marin-Sola, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 483.

⁹⁷ Yelle, G., *De Ecclesia et de locis theologicis*, (Montreal 1945) p. 102.

special grace from the stain of original sin, as declared by Alexander VII in 1661. This touches directly on the dogma of original sin, transmitted by natural propagation to all men, and thereby constituting them in a state of sin until the sin is taken away by regeneration in Baptism. "*Ut regeneratione mundetur quod generatione contraxerunt.*"⁹⁸ Hence the Feast of the Immaculate Conception is a profession of Faith involving an exception from the common revealed law of original sin. The connection with a revealed dogma is therefore clear, and the rule applies. It is simply the old major premise that the Church only celebrates the feasts of Saints, a premise used by the scholastics of the thirteenth century and utilized in the Bull *Ineffabilis*, with the assertion of the universality of the feast as the minor, since this had now been verified by the historic progress of the dogma. For the conclusion to be true, it must be true as an exception to the revealed law of original sin, and this cannot be known except by divine revelation. That is the implication here. The same reasoning holds for the universal consent of pastors and faithful as a profession of belief in the Immaculate Conception. The exception must enjoy the same character of revelation as the general law. The infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit in interpreting and guarding the deposit of Revelation is therefore assured in this matter.

This was substantially Passaglia's reasoning in the great work which he wrote on the eve of the definition and which was published shortly afterward. He says that the proposition of the Immaculate Conception is set forth as the motive of the feast and as an exception restricting the universal law of original sin. From the former is deduced the certain and infallible character of the proposition; from the latter, that it is revealed and comprised in the object of divine Faith.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ *DB* 791.

⁹⁹ *Mente igitur animoque recolatur, propositionem de immaculato Deiparae Conceptu non exhiberi dumtaxat ceu motivum cultus solemnisque celebritatis, sed sisti praeterea diserteque proponi veluti exceptionem, qua catholica fides christianaque revelatio de universali hereditariae labis propagatione verissime cohibetur. Atque hoc quidem pacto illam proponit Alexander VII inquit: Sane vetus est . . . speciali Dei gratia et privilegio . . . praeservatam immunem. . . Immo ante Alexandrum VII non aliam ineundam viam tridentina synodus*

When we come to the actual process by which the various groups working on the preparation of the definition of 1854 sought to assign the places in Revelation where the privilege is contained, the results were not definitive and completely satisfying. Many things were left unsettled and have remained so to this day.

Dom Gueranger thought that a definition of the Immaculate Conception would involve a definite fixation of the meaning of the Protoevangelium and the Angelic Salutation, but the definition did not directly touch the texts at all. However, they were adjudged solid enough to form part of the doctrinal explanation which precedes the definition and is intended to furnish its justification. In the commission of theologians sixteen out of twenty invoked Gen. 3, 15 in favor of the privilege.

The special commission in charge of drafting the Bull inserted a proof from it in the *Silloge degl'argomenti*, putting the emphasis on the common enmity of the Messiah and His Mother against the devil. They formulated two conclusions: first, that a solid argument in favor of the Immaculate Conception cannot be drawn from the words *Ipsa conteret caput tuum*; secondly, a solid argument can be founded on the text *Inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem*, etc. The Commission supported this view by an appeal to the Fathers, not invoking an explicit tradition but one that manifested itself by

arbitrata est. Sic enim Sixti IV constitutiones de obiecto deque motivo festi conceptionis innovavit servandasque praecepit ut principii loco declaraverit non esse suae intentionis comprehendere in decreto ubi de peccato originali agitur, beatam et immaculatam virginem Mariam Dei genitricem. Ac si aperte diceret constare sibi non posse quae Sixtus instituit quaeque catholica ecclesia de obiecto deque motivo festi conceptionis sentit ac praedicat nisi ab eiusdem ecclesiae mente dissonum foret ad ipsam quoque Deiparam amplitudinem hereditariae labis extendere; proindeque sanctam Synodum declarare, non esse suae intentionis comprehendere in decreto, ubi de peccato originali agitur, beatam et immaculatam virginem Mariam Dei genitricem. Propositio itaque de immaculato Deiparae conceptu duplici velut tessera distinguitur, quarum prior est ut *motivum* festi cultus praeseferat, posterior vero ut sit habeaturque *exceptio*, qua fides de universali paternae labis diffusionem restringitur. Quomodo vero ex priori tessera deduximus propositionem eam esse *certam* atque *infallibilem*, ita ex posteriori deducemus censi illam oportere *revelatam*, *obiectoque divinae fidei comprehensam*., Passaglia C., *De Immaculata Conceptione*. (Rome 1854) Pars tertia, p. 1234, n. 1715.

allusions to the struggle and victory common to the New Adam and New Eve.¹⁰⁰

In regard to Luke 1, 28, 42, the attitude of the theologians consulted was that most of them took the passage as a valid argument for the privilege, provided it be taken in conjunction with the exegetical tradition of the Fathers.¹⁰¹

The hypothesis of a primitive formal oral tradition received scant support from the consulting theologians, and the formula that the Immaculate Conception had been a constant doctrine in the Church—“*constantem fuisse et esse Catholicae Ecclesiae doctrinam*”—disappeared in the seventh and second last redaction of the Bull.

The sentiments of the objectors were summed up in the observation of Schwartzburg: “I do not understand how it can be affirmed and reaffirmed that the pious belief was manifested from the first ages of the Church by clear and indubitable testimonies, that the tradition has always existed.”¹⁰²

In the Bull of definition itself the development of the argument starts with the Predestination of Mary *uno eodemque decreto* as the Mother of God. It considers her concrete historic role as worthy Mother of the Redeemer and New Eve, who is closely associated with her Son in complete victory over Satan, and loved by her Son in a way in keeping with her dignity and role in the economy of salvation. Proceeding from the ultimate stage of the belief in the Church at the time, the Pope works back through the teaching of the Roman See and the Fathers, including their interpretation of the Protoevangelium and the Angelic Salutation, to the explicit belief of the Fathers and the Church in the Immaculate Conception.

The Church's role is to preserve and explain the whole deposit of Revelation and to set forth the truths therein contained. That is her first responsibility. Only secondarily is she interested in establishing the particular passages in which particular beliefs are contained. That she usually leaves to the work of theologians. Hence in the Bull of definition, she did not settle the question whether the Immaculate Conception is to be found explicitly in Scripture or in

¹⁰⁰ Le Bachelet, *op. cit.*, 859.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 862.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 1204; cfr. Sardi, *op. cit.*, t. II, 208, 215, 217, 274, 295.

Tradition, taken as a source and forming with Scripture the deposit of revelation. Neither has she decided whether it is contained formally implicitly or virtually.

In regard to the Protoevangelium, the Fathers are said to have taught that Christ the Redeemer is clearly and openly foretold, His Blessed Mother designated, and their common enmity against the devil signally expressed. In regard to the salutation of the angel and of Elizabeth, they taught that Mary was thereby shown to have been the abode of all divine graces and adorned with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit; she was the almost infinite treasury and inexhaustible abyss of those same gifts, so much so that she was never subject to the curse, and together with her Son shared in perpetual benediction. This last formula is peculiar to the definitive text of the Bull *Ineffabilis* and according to Jugie, was due to the initiative of Pius IX himself.¹⁰³ It renders more explicit Mary's fullness of grace by the complementary ideas of perpetual benediction and immunity from the curse, as seen in the light of Patristic tradition. It is not said by which of the senses of Sacred Scripture Mary is designated in the Protoevangelium. Diversity of opinion on this point has continued undiminished since the definition to our day, and endures even after the Bull *Munificentissimus Deus*, defining the Assumption.¹⁰⁴ It was enough for the Church that Mary's privilege was contained as part in the complete victory foretold in the Protoevangelium, and in her fullness of grace, and perpetual benediction, never subject to the curse, both passages being taken as parallel and interpreted in the light of active tradition.

The publication of the Bull *Munificentissimus Deus* at the definition of the Assumption was awaited with great interest for what it would say about the Protoevangelium. However, neither did it settle the question of the Scriptural sense involved in the Marian interpretation of it. It has corroborated the general structure of the procedure of *Ineffabilis Deus* by stating that the Fathers since the second century have proposed Mary as the New Eve, most closely associated with the New Adam in the combat against the host of

¹⁰³ Jugie M., *Le témoignage de saint Luc sur l'immaculée conception.*, 69.

¹⁰⁴ For a summary of the opinions, see: *Sacrae Theologiae Summa*, III, De Verbo Incarnato, (Madrid 1951) p. 346.

Hell. It states that the Protoevangelium foretells that the combat was to end in the fullest victory over sin and death, which are always linked together in the writings of the Apostle of the Gentiles. It emphasizes Christ's resurrection as an essential part and the last trophy of victory; and parallel to that, Mary's Assumption was the supreme crown of her privileges in preserving her immune from the corruption of the grave.¹⁰⁵

It seems in line with this thought of *Munificentissimus Deus* to conclude that in Mary's mysterious conjunction with Christ in the one same decree of predestination, her Immaculate Conception was the first triumph and the first essential part followed by her virginal maternity and noble association in the work of Redemption, and crowned by the Assumption.

In regard to the Angelic Salutation, *Munificentissimus Deus* states that the Scholastic theologians proposed it for special consideration, and saw in it the complement of the most full grace imparted to the Blessed Virgin and the singular benediction opposed to the malediction of Eve.¹⁰⁶

It further states that the force of the arguments of the Scholastic theologians rests on the incomparable dignity of the Divine Maternity and on those privileges which are consequent on it; these are her singular sanctity surpassing that of all men and angels, the intimate conjunction of Mary with her Son, and the special affection of love of the Son for His most worthy Mother.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Quamobrem, sicut gloriosa Christi anastasis essentialis pars fuit ac postremum huius victoriae tropaeum, ita Beatae Virginis commune cum Filio suo certamen virginei corporis 'glorificatione' concludendum erat; ut enim idem Apostolus ait, 'cum . . . mortale hoc induerit immortalitatem, tunc fiet sermo, qui scriptus est: absorpta est mors in victoria.', *AAS*, 42, (1950) 768.; cfr. Bea A., "Maria SS. nel Protovangelo", in *Marianum*, 1953, Fasc. I, 1-21.

¹⁰⁶ Item ex Novi Testamenti locis haec verba peculiari cura considerationi proposuere suae: 'Ave, gratia plena, Dominus tecum, benedicta tu in mulieribus', cum in Assumptionis mysterio complementum cernerent plenissimae illius gratiae, Beatae Virgini impertitae, singularemque benedictionem maledictioni Hevae adversantem., *AAS*, 42, (1950) 763.

¹⁰⁷ Cum hinc ratiocinando proficiscerentur, varia protulere argumenta, quibus mariale eiusmodi privilegium illustrarent, quorum quidem argumentorum quasi primum elementum hoc esse asseverabant, Iesum Christum nempe, pro sua erga Matrem pietate, eam voluisse ad Caelum assumptam; eorundem vero

In a word, it means the divine Maternity in its concrete historical realization. When we view the Immaculate Conception in the light of this teaching, the conclusion seems to emerge: that the privilege is contained implicitly, as a part in the whole, in the total victory of Mary foretold in the Protoevangelium; in her plenitude of grace never subject to the curse; and in the perpetual benediction of the Angelic Salutation as interpreted in the light of Tradition, first in a general and indefinite way of the all-holiness of Mary and complete immunity from sin; then later expressly of Mary's first creation and beginning of existence—her Immaculate Conception in the passive consummated sense. Viewed thus, it seems to be formally implicit, as a part in the whole, in the primitive deposit of Revelation.

Conclusion

Such has been the history of the three difficulties selected. They are by no means the only objections, but they seemed the most important. The thought that strikes one in looking back over the history of the dogma and its difficulties, is the irresistible power of the love of God's Mother both on the part of pastors and faithful, overcoming all obstacles, and, instinctively under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, leading them to the recognition and admiration of the ideal purity and complete sinlessness of her who was privileged above all others to have as her natural Son, the Only-Begotten of the Eternal Father.

In conclusion, a word of apology is in order. This paper had to be rather hurriedly prepared by one who is not a specialist in Mariology. I hope that it has not been too great a disappointment to the members of the Society, and that at least it will serve as a basis of discussion.

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argumentorum vim incomparabili inniti dignitate eius divinae maternitatis atque etiam eorum omnium munerum, quae eam consequuntur; quae quidem sunt insignis eius sanctitas, omnium hominum angelorumque sanctitudinem exsuperans; intima Mariae cum Filio suo coniunctio; ac praecipuae illius dilectionis affectus, qua Filius dignissimam Matrem suam prosequebatur. *AAS*, 42, (1950) 762.

DIGEST OF DISCUSSION

1. Father Walter Burghart, S.J. (Woodstock College, Woodstock, Md.), suggested that the doctrine of the Greek Fathers on the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady was not as clear as Father Owens' paper might have given the impression. The reason for this lack of clarity was their unwillingness to use the term "sin" for any but personal sin. It is important to keep this unwillingness of theirs in mind, for it has divided Marian scholars on the explanation of many texts. An instance in point might be the statement of St. Ephrem, "There was no taint of sin in Mary." The two schools explain the text differently, and consequently differ on its use in proving the Immaculate Conception of Mary. (A) The first school takes the words just as they stand, and conclude that St. Ephrem is teaching Mary's freedom from original sin; (B) The second school, basing their interpretation on the Greek Fathers' unwillingness to use the term "sin" except to mean personal sin, conclude that St. Ephrem means that there was no personal sin in Mary, and so the text cannot be used to prove Mary's Immaculate Conception. Altaner followed the first interpretation in his first edition, but in the second edition changed his view.

In this connection Father Owens thanked Father Burghart for his remark, but pointed out that the Greek Fathers were familiar with the use of the term "sin" in the sense of original sin, from their reading of Romans, 5, 12-21. Consequently, he argued, we cannot automatically dismiss a text of the Greek Fathers as having no proving force for Mary's Immaculate Conception.

When the discussion seemed to lag, Father Owens suggested that there might be points of inquiry in connection with the first and last obstacles dealt with in the paper, namely: (a) the universal law of original sin, and (b) the inclusion of the belief in the primitive deposit of revelation.

2. Father Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., Catholic University, Washington, D. C., then asked when did the controversy arise regarding the remote and proximate *debitum*. Father Owens answered that the point of the controversy had been implicit in the writings of Scotus, but that it had become an object of explicit consideration and debate in the times of Cajetan and Catharinus. Obviously, the

explanation of the method of transmitting original sin had great bearing on the development of this controversy. For example, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the opinion favoring the remote *debitum* gained considerable prominence. The reason for this was the prevalences of that time, of the various theories which explained the transmission of original sin by the inclusion of our wills in the will of Adam. In our own time, as Father Billot says, the theory of inclusion of our wills in Adam has been completely discarded, and so the number of those favoring the remote *debitum* has dwindled.

3. Father Eugene Burke, C.S.P., Catholic University, Washington, D. C., then asked: "In your research did you find that many medieval authors conceived marriage as something degrading, and used this view in their opposition to the Immaculate Conception? What caused this false concept of marriage?"

Father Owens replied that, although he was not prepared to say authoritatively that this was the common opinion of the times, or even the more common, he could state that it certainly was a widespread opinion, which lasted down to the eighteenth century. The basis for the false idea of marriage was the Augustinian conception of concupiscence as the cause of the transmission of original sin. These theologians held that in the marriage-act, inordinate (and therefore, sinful) concupiscence was involved. They argued, consequently, that that state of life whose proper act involves inordinate concupiscence, must itself be inordinate and degrading.

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