

those who maintained that the doctrine was heretical. The prayer in the Mass and the Office, prescribed by Sixtus IV., contained the admission of the Immaculate Conception, and was used for nearly a century, that is, from the pontificate of Sixtus IV. to Pius V. In 1568 the latter Pope suppressed the office of Mary's Conception, printed and published under Sixtus IV., restricting to the Franciscans the power of reciting it. But as the Pope's object was to prescribe a uniform mode of public prayer for the whole Church, he was induced to take this step solely on that ground, and not because there was anything objectionable in the Office. There were divers Offices of the Conception in use at that time, and the Pontiff chose the Office composed by Abbé Helsin. St. Pius V. also established the Feast of Mary's Conception as of precept for the whole Church. In the seventeenth century the olden controversy broke out anew and was waged with unusual vehemence. A Franciscan, named Francis de Santiago, made a public statement to the effect that the truth of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin had been positively confirmed by a vision granted to himself. This was the alarm-call to the battle on the part of both contestants. Amidst the din and uproar of the engagement, Philip III., King of Spain, had recourse to the Holy See for a solution of the question. The reigning Pontiff, Paul V., answered by re-publishing the decrees of Sixtus IV., issued in 1476 and 1483, which respected the celebration of the Mass and the Office of the Feast. He also commanded both parties to refrain from stigmatizing each other as heretics. He had no objection to the scientific point of view in the discussion, but he prohibited the

question being made the subject of controversial sermons. In his Bull of 1621, Paul V. ordained that no expression other than *The Conception of the Blessed Virgin*, should be used in either the missal or the public offices of the Church, as certain persons had begun to substitute for *conception, sanctification*. Later Philip IV. begged from Gregory XV. a decision of the question, who simply renewed the decree of Paul V. and extended its restrictive nature to writings and private discourses. Alexander VII. was also urged to decide the question, and he published a Bull in 1661, in which he referred to the action of his predecessors and manifested a marked tendency towards the belief in the Immaculate Conception of Mary. No formal definition of the dogma was made, and so matters stood down to the middle of the last century, when the illustrious Benedict XIV. said in his treatise on this subject: "While the Apostolic See does not as yet declare the Immaculate Conception of Mary to be an article of faith, it is nevertheless evident that the result of the discussion goes to show that the Church is favorable to the opinion."

Many petitions were addressed to Pope Gregory XVI., urging him to proclaim and define the dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception, but the Pontiff took no action in the matter, and it was reserved to Pius IX. of saintly memory to be the agent of God's will and love. When the Holy Father was driven by revolutionary violence into exile at Gaeta, Nov. 24th, 1848, the first step towards settling the great theological question that had occupied the attention of ages was taken. Pius IX. was most devoted to the Mother of God, and in the very midst of the warfare that assailed himself