

opposition soon endeavored to return into the controversy by way of equivocation. The word *conception*, so long and so warmly contested, would be given up; but the word *immaculate*, to what did it refer? was it to the *conception* itself? or was it not rather a simple qualification of the *person*? This sophistical distinction openly belied all the antecedents of the controversy; it even insulted the great names mixed up with it on either side; and yet it was about to renew the struggle, when in 1661, on the very day of the Conception, appeared the ever memorable Constitution of Alexander VII. There, every avenue was closed against the spirit of contention; there, the meaning of the festival was clearly explained, the pontifical dispositions revealed, the treasury of the Church opened wider than ever, the devotion to the Immaculate Conception explicitly drawn up, approved, and encouraged; finally, every succeeding Pontiff renewed and sanctioned the menaces of his predecessors against any writing or discourse impugning the *pious* belief.

This was a death-blow to a desperate cause, which had long exhausted its strength by discussion. From that hour opposition was unheard of within the Church; doubt and negation, which formerly manifested themselves in clamor and dissension, dared no longer assail the mind, and there were none but sectarian voices to disturb from time