

learning being found on both sides, when the Council of Basle, lifting up its voice amid the clamor of the contest, declared the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception *pious, conformable to Scripture, and in harmony with Catholic faith and worship*, and commanded its adversaries to be silent. But what could a headless Council do to calm such a storm? It is true, the Pontiffs were there to support the defenders of the *pious* belief with the weight of their venerated word. Sixtus IV was peculiarly favorable to the cause. He was seen alternately throwing open in its favor the treasury of the Church, encouraging by indulgences the office of the *Immaculate* Conception, menacing with his thunders any one who dared to tax with mortal sin the celebration of that office, or to mention as heretical the doctrine which teaches that *Mary was never defiled with the original stain*. Although deeply wounded, the opposition was not crushed, and the Council of Trent found it still living.

It was thought at one time that the august tribunal where the Holy Ghost, through the organ of the Church, decides so many important disputes, would at length put an end to this discussion. The opinion of the Fathers was not doubtful; but adversaries were there, covering themselves, for want of truth, with the triple recommendation of virtue, learning, and Catholic devotion. The Di-

