

them to have held, in respect to her, whom they esteemed "the second Eve:" from these extracts, and from the mind of the fathers which they represent, he draws two inferences; first, that they ascribe to the Virgin a peculiar sanctity, and secondly, a supereminent greatness. From this sanctity, due to the fulness of divine grace resting upon her, Dr. Newman deduces the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception: and if we accept the view of this dogma which he offers, and the explanations with which he accompanies the statement of it, it becomes a debateable question, how far we ourselves really hold it. That the Virgin was made meet for her holy and wondrous position as Mother of God, by great grace given to her, and by a sanctification of peculiar force, no reasonable man can doubt. We only venture to doubt whether this sanctification dates from the time of her conception, or whether she was at some subsequent time made fit for her great exaltation. And here the difference between the Romish and Anglican view may lie partly in the difference of the view we take of original sin; on the Romish theory that it consists in "the deprivation of the supernatural unmerited "grace which Adam and Eve had on their creation," the Immaculate Conception of Mary consists in the restoration to her of this grace, "by God's free bounty "from the first moment of her existence." If, indeed, we attach some such sense as this to original sin, if we suppose that Adam and Eve before their fall were in the possession of this grace, then it becomes impossible to suppose that this grace was not restored to the Virgin: her sanctification does not raise her above the level of our race, it only implies her being made in God's mysterious workings worthy to be the Mother of Jesus. And if we assent to her sanctification, we are, at least, not diametrically opposed to the view of her Immaculate Conception. We may certainly understand how upon the view which Roman Catholic writers take of this condition of grace, is built up the devotion to St. Mary, which they allow and encourage: the dignity of the Theotokos inspires the highest reverence; and this reverence, these ideas of sanctity and greatness, penetrating the minds of men, have ripened into an "august cultus."

"She is our pride," in the poet's words, "our tainted nature's 'solitary boast.' "We look to her without any fear, any remorse, any consciousness, that she is "able to read us, judge us, punish us. Our heart yearns towards that pure "Virgin, that gentle Mother, and our congratulations follow her, &c."

But while these views are defended, there is in this letter no attempt made to conceal the fact that this veneration has degenerated into superstition, this cultus into worship due only to the Son of Mary. Dr. Newman says:—"That in "times and places this cultus has fallen into abuse, that it has even become a "superstition, I do not care to deny; for the same process which brings to maturity carries on to decay, and things that do not admit of abuse have very little "life in them."

Even the Holy See has itself been compelled to interfere and suppress by authority books upon the subject; and extracts are quoted from several Roman writers to illustrate the desire which has been shown to restrain this devotion:

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