

ception was now propagated everywhere; it struck deep root, and the feast was devoutly observed in all churches. One of the Popes welcomed the feast to Rome, and recognizing the meaning of this, the Religious Orders: the Benedictines, Carmelites, Celestines, Trinitarians, the children of St. Augustine, of St. Bernard, and especially of St. Francis, who had given its worthy champions to the cause, all opened their conventional homes and churches to this wide-spread belief, which, as all forecasts pointed, would soon be embodied in Catholic dogma.

Consistency, however, does not appear to be a ruling characteristic of the human mind when it is agitated, when it is striving for victory or is lulled too long in the sleep of peace. The least commotion awakens it from its quietude, and oftentimes the standard that has seemingly fallen in the dust forever is raised again and floats till something decisive occurs to demonstrate triumph on one side or the other. Duns Scotus died in 1308, and, in 1387, an event happened which called the rival parties again to the conflict. There were some Christians who appeared to be frightened at the general acceptance of this holy belief, and zealous to preserve intact the purity of Catholic doctrine, they rushed to extremes. The question was as yet undecided formally by the Church, though it was generally held that Mary was Immaculate. The sons of St. Dominic—a saint who, it is said, defended the doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception against the Albigenses—arose in opposition to that same doctrine, and their opinion was voiced by John de Montezon who publicly denied that Mary's conception was attended with exemption from original sin. He was condemned by both the University

and the Bishop of Paris. He appealed at once to the Pope, (or anti-Pope) Clement VII., but he did not dare to appear at Rome, and was condemned for contumacy. Two camps were again formed, and they revived the old contest with fierce and unyielding warfare. We may easily judge that neither zeal nor learning was wanting to either side when we look at the multitudinous writings that appeared concerning the controversy. The battle did not diminish with time, but waxed warm and persistent.

The Council of Basle lifted up its voice amidst the fire and smoke of this theological conflict, and declared the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception to be *pious, conformable to Scripture, and in harmony with Catholic faith and worship*. The Council also commanded the adversaries of the belief to be silent. When the Council gave forth this declaration in 1439, it had become Schismatical on account of its opposition to the Pope, and though the Canons of a Schismatical Council have no binding force on Catholic conscience, yet the very declaration goes to show that belief in the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin was general, and devotion towards it was manifest in the Catholic world at large. Of course the action of the Council had little effect on the condition of the controversy which was carried on with as fiery zeal as ever. If the words of the Bishops of Basle fell on barren soil, the Sovereign Pontiffs offered the weight of their solemn words to uphold belief and practice. This was noticeably the case with Sixtus IV. This Pope desired to put an end to the differences between the Thomists and Scotists, which kept countries and communities in a state of alarm and disorder, and he encouraged the faithful