

each successive phase of that long controversy, appears in the nineteenth century with all the splendor of a supreme definition; and, if it be true that the past and the present prophesy, may we not say that the belief in the Immaculate Conception has in its history a presage of its future, and, as it were, a prediction of its *Catholic* destiny?

What we are now to consider is: *Can the belief in the Immaculate Conception, as it now stands, receive the sanction of a dogmatical definition?* The question is twofold; it regards both the theory and the application; let us divide the elements of the thesis in order to examine them separately. It is of history that this belief never figured in the creed, and that it long divided the minds of men: now, the first question is, Can a belief hitherto free, and long even an object of serious discussion, become an article of faith? Suppose the affirmative; it is incontestable that any belief whatsoever, in order to take its place in the Catholic creed, must have the conditions requisite to form a sufficient basis for the dogmatical definition: does the Immaculate Conception possess these previous conditions? This is the second question.

To ask whether a belief once disputed may be inserted in the creed, is, at the first glance, a question which may appear useless to men versed in theology. Nevertheless, there are few questions which it imports us more to examine at the present