

thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, agitated as it was by the master minds of the day. Although more radical than it was at the outset, the discussion had not yet sufficiently disengaged the main point from its accessories; and as it always happens, the want of precision on the real object of the controversy, prevented any good that might have accrued on behalf of the truth, until the luminous mind of St. Bonaventure at length discerned and revealed to the contending parties the true nature of the question. The word *Conception* was perpetually recurring on both sides; but what was the meaning of that word? Did it signify the concurrence of material elements in the formation of the virginal body of the Blessed Virgin Mary? or did it simply indicate the union of her holy soul with the body already formed? This distinction was a ray of light illuminating the whole thesis: the Seraphic Doctor had made it understood that, in the latter case, the question was simply this—whether in forming this marvellous work, God had united to the body of the Blessed Virgin, a soul adorned with, or deprived of original justice. Reduced to this formula, the controversy was prolonged, without either party gaining much advantage over the other, when suddenly there was seen to enter the lists a man who was to change the face of things. That man, immortalized by this discussion, was John Duns Scotus. God was