

PREDESTINATION AND MARY'S IMMACULATE CONCEPTION: AN EVANGELICALLY CATHOLIC INTERPRETATION

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Catholic Marian doctrine is widely regarded—by both Catholics and Protestants—as a stumbling block to ecumenism, especially in its most recent developments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when (according to Protestant accusation) things *really* got out of hand.¹ For one

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1. To keep this article within suitable bounds, I will be concentrating here solely on Protestant objections—and the way those objections might be answered using specifically Protestant axioms. Of course, there are ecumenical issues with the Orthodox tradition here as well, but they map out differently, not least because (ironically enough) Roman mariological doctrine owes so much to Orthodox Marian devotion, as Brian Daley notes: “My point here (which needs no long argument for those familiar with the world of Byzantine liturgy and theology) is that what many—including Karl Barth—think of as characteristically Western, Catholic ways of conceiving and approaching Mary are as much Orthodox as Catholic, as much Eastern as Western.” Brian Daley, S.J., *Woman of Many Names: Mary in Orthodox and Catholic Theology*, The Theotokos Lecture in Theology, 2008 (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2008), 20. Of course, that does not mean that the Roman-defined dogma of Mary’s Immaculate Conception is problem-free for the Orthodox. Along with the issue of papal authority, whose rejection is shared by Protestants (see the next note), the Orthodox often demur at the Augustinian presuppositions shared by both Roman Catholics and Protestants, as again Daley notes: “Always nervous about what they understand to be Augustine’s influence, Orthodox theologians of the [twentieth] century have pointed out that the main difference between East and West on the doctrine of Mary’s predestined holiness is that the East has never understood the effects of the fall in terms of shared guilt for an ‘original sin,’ as Western theology has done since Augustine, so that the work of divine grace in her is seen less in terms of a radical reconditioning of human nature than it is in the West” (21). Nonetheless, the *substance* of the Roman doctrine largely overlaps with the Orthodox position, at least if we may take Sergei Bulgakov as representative: “It goes without saying that, even if we do not accept the Catholic dogma of the ‘immaculate’ conception, we must confess that the Mother of

thing, the Catholic-specific doctrines of Mary's Immaculate Conception and her bodily Assumption into heaven at the end of her earthly life are intimately bound up with the exercise of papal magisterial authority—another neuralgic point for Protestants (and not a few Catholics too).²

Second, these two doctrines cannot be found in Scripture, or so goes the claim, which if true would violate one of the central axioms of the Reformation: the *sola scriptura* principle. The case of the Immaculate Conception is even more dire, for here the Bible is not just silent on the issue but seems directly to contradict the doctrine. For according to Paul, “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). If Paul does not mean *all* here—everyone without exception—when he *uses* the word “all,” then why have a Bible at all?

Third, Catholic Marian doctrines are accused of drawing their sustenance from the surrounding pagan culture—just what we would expect to happen, given their unscriptural provenance. As Joseph Ratzinger said

God is entirely full of grace.” Sergius Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 411n23. See also Sergius Bulgakov, *The Burning Bush: The Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God*, trans. Thomas Allan Smith (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009). Because I will be concentrating on the classical Protestant doctrines of *sola gratia* and predestination, I will also be unable to discuss recent advances in Catholic/Anglican understanding of the Immaculate Conception, which focuses more on the role of Scripture and Mary's role as the premier of the saints. On which see *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ. The Seattle Statement of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission: The Text with Commentaries and Study Guide* (New York: Continuum, 2006).

2. But can there be a concept of revelation without an infallible magisterium? Not for the future Cardinal Newman, who—while still an Anglican—insisted that the concept of revelation *directly* entails an infallible magisterium, or else there is no revelation to speak of. Since Catholic Marian doctrine is intimately bound up with claims to magisterial infallibility, we must note, at least in passing, his defense of a teaching office endowed with the grace of infallibility: “The most obvious answer, then, to the question, why we yield to the authority of the Church in the questions and developments of faith, is, that some authority there must be if there is a revelation given, and other authority there is none but she. A revelation is not given if there be no authority to decide what it is that is given. . . . If Christianity is both social and dogmatic, and intended for all ages, it must humanly speaking have an infallible expounder. Else you will secure unity of form at the loss of unity of doctrine, or unity of doctrine at the loss of unity of form; you will have to choose between a comprehension of opinions and a resolution into parties, between latitudinarian and sectarian error. You may be tolerant or intolerant of contrarities of thought, but contrarities you will have. By the Church of England a hollow uniformity is preferred to an infallible chair; and by the sects of England an interminable division. Germany and Geneva began with persecution and have ended in scepticism. The doctrine of infallibility is a less violent hypothesis than this sacrifice either of faith or of charity. It secures the object, while it gives definiteness and force to the matter, of the Revelation.” John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, in *Conscience, Consensus, and the Development of Doctrine*, ed. James Gaffney (New York: Doubleday, 1992 [1845]), 111–12. Not surprisingly, while these words were being typeset at the printery, Newman was received into the Roman Church. Protestants who reject the dogma of the Immaculate Conception will, of course, have to reject simultaneously papal claims to infallibility. Newman's point is simply that such a rejection is not consequence-free. For a balanced Protestant engagement with this issue, see Mark E. Powell, *Papal Infallibility: A Protestant Evaluation of an Ecumenical Issue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

back in his days as a professor of dogmatics in Regensburg, “many find no embarrassment in identifying the non-Christian origin of Marian belief and devotion: from Egyptian myths, from the cult of the Great Mother, from Diana of Ephesus who [surreptitiously] became ‘Mother of God’ (*Theotokos*) at the council convened in Ephesus.”³

Fourth—and once again keeping strictly to the Immaculate Conception—the issue was hotly debated in the Middle Ages, with no less an authority than Thomas Aquinas holding against it, which hardly speaks to the unanimity of tradition.⁴ If this dogma is supposed to be located in some putative unbroken oral Tradition (with a capital *T*), handed down by the apostles intact as a “second source” of revelation operating independently of the Bible and whispered in the sacristy by each ordaining bishop to his successor at the conclusion of the rite, then how did Thomas never come to hear of it? Thus we may conclude: a doctrine less palatable to the prospects of ecumenical rapprochement would be hard to imagine.

In what follows, I shall be discussing only the Immaculate Conception and will leave out any treatment of Mary’s bodily Assumption into heaven; that is a topic that deserves separate treatment and raises issues specific to itself.⁵ But I wish to focus here on the Immaculate Conception not just for

3. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion: Meditations on the Church’s Marian Belief*, trans. John M. McDermott, S.J. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983 [German original 1977]), 9–10.

4. Traditional Dominican opposition to the doctrine led to a noticeable eclipse of the order in the Rome of Pius IX: “In the eighteenth century the Dominicans had 25,000 members in the whole Order. The Napoleonic Revolution left them with almost none. For a time they remained under a cloud at Rome because of their opposition, which was traditional, to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin. In 1876 they were still only 3,341.” Owen Chadwick, *A History of the Popes: 1830–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 516.

5. I can note here in passing, however, that ecumenical discussion of Mary’s Assumption might best begin with an investigation of the wide range of meanings given to the word *body* that can be found in the New Testament, especially in Paul, on which the Anglican bishop and noted New Testament scholar John Robinson had fascinating things to say: “One could say without exaggeration that the concept of the body forms the keystone of Paul’s theology. In its closely interconnected meanings, the word *soma* [body] knits together all his great themes. It is from the body of sin and death that we are delivered; it is through the body of Christ on the Cross that we are saved; it is into His body the Church that we are incorporated; it is by His body in the Eucharist that this Community is sustained; it is in our body that its new life has to be manifested; it is to a resurrection of this body to the likeness of His glorious body that we are destined. Here, with the exception of the doctrine of God, are represented all the main tenets of the Christian Faith—the doctrines of Man, Sin, the Incarnation and Atonement, the Church, the Sacraments, Sanctification, and Eschatology. To trace the subtle links and interaction between the different senses of this word *soma* is to grasp the thread that leads through the maze of Pauline thought.” J. A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952), 9. To what extent does the doctrine of Mary’s bodily Assumption jibe with one or more of these multivalent meanings, if any? In addition, the interchangeability—indeed total and complete equivalence—of matter and energy in Einsteinian physics would presumably have to play a role as well in any discussion of bodily resurrection/assumption, obviously a topic too broad and complicated to be taken up here.

reasons of limited time and space but also, paradoxically enough, *for its ecumenical potential*. For, when looked at more closely, the doctrine actually dovetails quite neatly with important Reformation concerns, especially the topoi of unmerited grace and predestination. One can, after all, hardly “merit” grace until one first exists, but Mary was given a singular grace *at* the first moment of her conception, which also means that she must in some sense have been predestined for her role as Mother of God from all eternity and quite independent of any later “merit” on her part (what is known as *ante merita praevisa*, in the traditional terminology).

Not only have the ecumenical implications of this dogma gone relatively unappreciated, but we must also take into account the doctrine’s extraordinary fruitfulness, which for Cardinal Newman was itself a sign of authentic development—the authenticity of which can be detected from what he calls a doctrine’s “power of assimilation” and its “chronic vigor.” I am reminded here of Jaroslav Pelikan’s observation that the manifestation of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in 1858 to Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes proved to be Catholicism’s greatest evangelizing and revitalizing force in nineteenth-century Catholicism, far exceeding any other:

There is good reason to believe that neither the intellectual defense of Christian revelation by the apologetic enterprise in nineteenth-century Roman Catholic theology, including the revival of Thomistic philosophical apologetics, nor the political defense of the institutional church and its prerogatives against the anticlericalism of that time was as effective a campaign, particularly among the common people, as the one that the Virgin Mary waged. For it has been well said that “Rome is the head of the Church but Lourdes is its heart.”⁶

In what follows I will be focusing on a central paradox embedded in *all* Marian doctrines across the board (of which the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is but one example), one that first came to light during the controversy set in motion by Patriarch Nestorius when he had objected to Mary’s traditional title as Theotokos, or Mother of God. His logic, at first glance, seemed impeccable: the pagan god Apollo, after all, had a mother (Hera), but the Christian God—by definition the Ungenerated and Unbegotten—could not possibly be said to have a mother. To say otherwise would be to lapse back into pagan polytheism.⁷

6. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 184, internally quoting Andrea Dahlberg, “The Body as a Principle of Holism: Three Pilgrimages to Lourdes,” in *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, ed. John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow (New York: Routledge, 1991), 35.

7. “We designate as pagan all the religions of mankind from the beginnings of recorded history to the present, excepting Israelite religion and its derivatives, Christianity and Islam. . . . In myth the gods appear not only as actors, but as acted upon. . . . Corresponding to

While Nestorius no doubt found his reasoning airtight (who doesn't think that of his own convictions?), his vehement critic Cyril of Alexandria pointed out—with his usual unsparing vigor—that a denial of this title to Mary came at the price of bifurcating the person of Christ. For if Mary gave birth only to the *human being* Jesus, then Christ could be divine only by the legal fiction of adoption or by awkward juxtaposition, with the divinity conjoined to the humanity like two oxen yoked to a plow. But that would mean that Christ died only in his human nature. After all, *God*, who is the immutable source of all life, doesn't die—only biological beings do; and since no human being on his own can save, Christ's death by crucifixion in the Nestorian schema would be no more saving than was the death by crucifixion of the slave Spartacus.

Cyril was, of course, perfectly aware that calling Mary the Mother of the Ungenerated and Unbegotten—who by definition sprang from no other being—was paradoxical, but for him that was the whole *point*: “The one incapable of suffering did suffer” (*ho Apathos epathen*), as he notes in his most famous formulation—a logic-defying, oxymoronic “impassible suffering” took place in God's providence so that, as Cyril says, “we might see side by side the wound together with the remedy, the patient with the physician, what sank towards death together with him who raised it up to life, . . . that which has been mastered by death with him who conquered death, what was bereft of life together with him who was the provider of life.”⁸

Now there can be no doubt that Cyril defended Mary's title as Mother of God entirely for Christological reasons, which is why the Reformers in the sixteenth century—at least the christologically orthodox Lutherans and Calvinists—defended the teaching of the Council of Ephesus of A.D. 431, which affirmed Mary's title of Theotokos and solemnly declared its denial to be heretical. But ideas as fruitful and paradoxical as this one never sit still, and it was inevitable that the constant iteration of calling

the birth of the gods through natural processes is their subjection to sexual conditions. All pagan religions have male and female deities who desire and mate with each other. . . . The basic idea of Israelite religion, [however], is that God is supreme over all. There is no realm above or beside him to limit his absolute sovereignty. He is utterly distinct from, and other than, the world; he is subject to no laws, no compulsions, or powers that transcend him. He is, in short, non-mythological. This is the essence of Israelite religion, and that which sets it apart from all forms of paganism. . . . *Israel's God has no pedigree, fathers no generations; he neither inherits nor bequeaths his authority. He does not die and is not resurrected. He has no sexual qualities or desires and shows no need of or dependence upon powers outside himself.*” Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, trans. Moshe Greenberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 21, 22, 23, 60–61; emphasis added. To Nestorius, calling Mary the mother of God had the disastrous consequence of undercutting this absolutely crucial distinction between pagan polytheism and Christian monotheism.

8. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, at John 1:14a, in *Cyril of Alexandria*, trans. Norman Russell (London: Routledge, 2000), 105–6.

Mary Mother of God in liturgical worship and private piety would lead to further reflection on Mary's role in salvation, as Newman saw:

In order to do honor to Christ, in order to defend the true doctrine of the Incarnation, in order to secure a right faith in the manhood of the Eternal Son, the Council of Ephesus determined the Blessed Virgin to be the Mother of God. Thus all the heresies of that day, though opposite to each other, tended in a most wonderful [albeit for the heretics obviously unintentional] way to her exaltation; and the School of Antioch, the fountain of primitive rationalism, led the Church to determine first the conceivable greatness of a creature, and then the incommunicable dignity of the Blessed Virgin.⁹

But this dignity was itself the outcome (as we saw above) of pure, unmerited grace—one that, moreover, was meant both to typify and embody the reality of the church. In what follows, I shall be relying on the interpretation of Hans Urs von Balthasar, who helpfully contextualized this doctrine in terms of salvation history. Traditionally, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception spoke of Mary being free from any “taint” of sin (*macula* being the Latin word for blot or stain), which links the doctrine, at least by implication, with Old Testament purity laws. But Balthasar sees the doctrine more in terms of prevenient grace, that is, of God's radical inbreaking into salvation history via a totally *human* yes to his prior *divine* yes:

Now, suddenly, we see the meaning of this [doctrine]. The God who pulls down the barriers erected by men does not want to keep his own total lack of barriers to himself: he wants to bring this absolute positivity into the world and communicate it to the earthly realm as well, like rain and dew falling on the soil. Somewhere on earth there must ring out, in response to this word, not a half answer but a whole one, not a vague answer but an exact one. . . . By the power of heaven, the earth must accept the arrival of grace so that it can really come to earth and carry out its work of liberation . . . [via] a word of consent [that] can only be given to earth from heaven's treasure house of love.¹⁰

9. John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989 [1845]), 135.

10. Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Abolishing the Boundaries,” a radio sermon delivered on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, in *You Crown the Year with Your Goodness: Sermons through the Liturgical Year*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989 [German 1982]), 267. Further: “This quality of Mary's Yes is wholly a function of the requirements of Christology. . . . [T]hat she ‘was conceived immaculate’ says nothing but what is indispensable for the boundlessness of her Yes. For anyone affected in some way by original sin would be incapable of such a guileless openness to every disposition of God.” Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Mary in the Church's Doctrine and Devotion,” in *Mary: The Church at the Source*, by Hans Urs von Balthasar and Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005 [German original, 1997]): 99–124; here 105.

Although this doctrine is highly controversial because of its Protestant rejection, it is Balthasar's reading that first taught me how this doctrine actually resonates quite remarkably with the Reformation stress on *sola gratia*. As pointed out above, one can hardly "merit" grace until one first exists, but Mary received this special grace, by definition, *at* her conception. Furthermore, far from denying Christ's unique and irreplaceable role in effecting salvation, this doctrine, properly interpreted, *relies* on it:

In the course of unfolding these implications, two difficulties were encountered that have occupied theology right up to medieval and modern times. The first arose from the realization that God's action in reconciling the world to himself in the cross of Christ is exclusively his initiative: there is no original "collaboration" between God and the creature. But . . . the creature's "femininity" possesses an original, God-given, active fruitfulness; it was essential, therefore, if God's Word willed to become incarnate in the womb of a woman, to elicit agreement and obedient consent. . . . But where did the grace that made this possible come from—a consent that is adequate and therefore genuinely unlimited—if not from the work of reconciliation itself, that is, from the cross? (And of course the cross is rendered possible only through Mary's consent.) Here we have a circle—in which the effect is the cause of the cause—that has taken centuries to appreciate and formulate, resulting in the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the exact reasoning behind it.¹¹

In other words, what Balthasar seems to be saying here is that the *denial* of the doctrine leaves the way open to a kind of Pelagian Mariology. For if Mary had been tainted by original sin, there would have to be in her an element of struggle against its legacy, what Augustine called the *fomes peccati* (tinderbox or powder keg of sin), which would imply either a blemish of works-righteousness in her assent, or at least a struggle to obey God, a distracting effort that would obviously inhibit the total yes that God was expecting of his creature in response to his own total yes in Christ (2 Cor 1:20). Not, of course, that the singular grace she received made her less free; for it has been the consistent doctrine of the churches (especially those most heavily influenced by St. Augustine) that the freedom to sin is no freedom at all. Mary's yes to God in her fiat is entirely free precisely because it is entirely a graced assent.¹²

11. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, Volume 3: *Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992 [German, 1972]), 296–97.

12. Recall here that for Augustine concupiscence in children is sinful (*Contra Julianum* 2:5, 12; *Opus incompletum contra Julianum* 4:41; 5:20), a view that would later be condemned by Trent when Martin Luther made it an operative principle of his *sola fide* principle. Aquinas began to move away from this extreme pessimism, but not enough to lead him to the conclusion of Mary's Immaculate Conception: "ita peccatum originale non est peccatum hujus naturae, nisi in quantum haec persona recipit naturam a primo partente. Unde et vocatur peccatum naturae; secundum illud Eph. II, 'eramus filii irae.'" *ST* I-II, q. 81, a. 1,

For that same reason, Mary can also be called “Mother of the Church,” for the church’s own true identity must also include being the “spotless and pure bride” spoken of by St. Paul, a church “without stain, wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Eph 5:27). Such sinlessness does not currently obtain, of course, in the church that Augustine called a *corpus mixtum*, but that is surely the church Christ *intends* and was accordingly instantiated at the first moment of the earthly existence of his mother, who thereby becomes the church’s truest identity.

Speaking very generally, much Protestant theology would reject such an implication, based on Melanchthon’s forensic theory of justification, which admits no genuine change in the believer. For Melanchthon, the Christian is always *simul justus et peccator*, with the *peccator* describing the believer’s actual being and the *justus* referring to the righteousness of Christ. Righteousness is “imputed” rather than “infused.”¹³ Justification so understood is a purely eschatological act, being identical with the righteousness for which one has been eternally predestined by grace, irrespective of works—a theme that became even more prominent among the heirs of Calvin. The irony in this position, however, is that this same theme of predestination played so important a function in eventually convincing the Catholic Church of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

The role of Blessed John Duns Scotus in arguing for Mary’s Immaculate Conception has long been recognized, but crucial in his argument is the part predestination plays. Besides famously disagreeing with Thomas on the Immaculate Conception, Scotus also insisted against Thomas that Christ would have become man quite independent of the sin of Adam and Eve, a doctrine technically known as “the priority of Christ.” This term, when used in its technical sense, does not refer to Christ’s priority as savior of the human race over against other founders of world religions (which, of course, no medieval theologian would have disputed in any event). Rather, the term refers to the priority of Christ in God’s aboriginal decision to create the world, which God did, according to Scotus, who relies on Paul here, through and *for* Christ (Col 1:16b), that is, regardless of whether our first parents would have sinned or not.

Thomas is generally taken to hold that the Incarnation would not have taken place had not our first parents sinned, but actually his position is far

in fine c. On the differences between Augustine and Thomas here see Mark Johnson, “Augustine and Aquinas on Original Sin: Doctrine, Authority, and Pedagogy,” in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, ed. Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 145–58.

13. I am speaking purely historically here, describing the historical reception-history of Luther’s views via Melanchthon. Twentieth-century scholarship, at least certain schools of it, has challenged the idea that Melanchthon accurately handed on Luther’s true views. See *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

more nuanced, at least earlier in his career, when he is writing his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. In that early text, he admits that the majority position opts for contingency, but then he concedes that Christ's predestination to become man independent of sin cannot be disproved:

The truth of this question is known only to God. We can know what depends solely on the divine will only insofar as we can glean some knowledge from the writings of the saints to whom God has revealed his purpose. The canon of Scripture and the quotations from the Fathers mentioned above [chiefly Augustine, Gregory] assign one cause only to the incarnation: man's redemption from the slavery of sin. . . . Other theologians, however, hold that the purpose of the incarnation of the Son of God was not only freedom from sin, but also the exaltation of human nature and the consummation of the whole universe. It follows that even had there been no sin, the incarnation would have taken place for these other reasons. This opinion is equally probable.¹⁴

Writing about twenty years later, however, he seems to give the argument, on balance, to the defenders of contingency: "In Scripture the cause of the incarnation is always given as the sin of the first man. It is therefore more conveniently said that the incarnation is a work ordained by God as a remedy for sin. Wherefore: no sin, no incarnation. However, God's power is not limited to this, and even without sin he could have become man."¹⁵

What is fascinating about this increased diffidence toward the absolute priority of Christ is that Thomas also grows, *pari passu*, more diffident toward the idea of affirming Mary's Immaculate Conception. In his *Commentary on the Sentences* he inclines to the view that Mary was immaculately conceived.¹⁶ But once again, roughly twenty years later, he retreats from entertaining this affirmation in his second *Summa* and rejects the idea outright:

If the soul of the Blessed Virgin had never incurred the stain of original sin, this would be derogatory to the dignity of Christ, by reason of his being the universal Savior of all. . . . For Christ did not contract original sin in

14. Thomas Aquinas, *III Sent.* d.1 q.1 a.3. I am drawing here from my recently published analysis, *Infinity Dwindled to Infancy: A Catholic and Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 206–9.

15. *ST III* q.1 a.3. In other words, God *could* have but *didn't*. Whether the different Christologies of Thomas and Scotus are affected as well by their different definitions of what it means to be a *person* is addressed by James B. Reichmann, S.J., "Aquinas, Scotus, and the Christological Mystery: Why Christ Is Not a Human Person," *Thomist* 71 (2007): 451–74.

16. Thomas Aquinas, *In I Sent.* d. 44, q. q, a. 3, ad 3: "Item, videtur quod nec Beata Virgine, quia secundum Anselmum, decuit ut virgo quam Deus Unigenito Filio suo praeeparavit in matrem, ea puritate niteret, quo major sub Deo nequit intelligi. Sed nihil potest Deus facere quod sibi in bonitate vel puritate aequetur. Ergo videtur nihil melius Beata Virgine facere possit."

any way whatever, but was holy in his very conception. . . . But the Blessed Virgin did indeed contract original sin, but was cleansed therefrom before her birth from the womb.¹⁷

John Duns Scotus, however, was entirely unequivocal in his defense of the absolute priority of Christ, who (according to the Subtle Doctor) would have become man even if our first parents had not sinned. This dispute between Thomists and Scotists might seem arcane and often provokes impatience in modern readers, very much including theologians, but more rides on this issue than might be evident at first glance, especially regarding our topic, and it perhaps can even explain why Thomas went astray on Mary's Immaculate Conception.¹⁸ The conjoined importance of predestination, the priority of Christ and Mary's Immaculate Conception can be seen in the *locus classicus* of the Scot's argument, here:

Quaero: I ask, was Christ predestined to be the Son of God?

Respondeo: I reply that predestination consists in foreordaining someone, first of all to glory and then to all other things which are ordained to that glory. . . . At this point, however, two doubts arise: *First*, does this predestination depend necessarily upon the fall of human nature? Many authorities seem to say as much when they declare the Son of God would never have become incarnate had man not fallen. Without passing [invidious] judgment [on these authorities], it can be said that so far as priority of the objects intended by God is concerned, *the predestination of anyone to glory is prior by nature to the prevision of sin or damnation of anyone*. . . . So much

17. ST III, q. 27, a. 2, ad 2. So categorical was this statement that it seems to have blocked the bishops assembled at the Council of Trent from declaring as defined dogma Mary's Immaculate Conception: "We know that the vast majority of the Council Fathers [at Trent] were of the opinion that they might there and then define the Immaculate Conception as a Catholic truth already sufficiently accepted by the Church; they refrained from doing so, however, out of respect for the small number of the members of this venerable assembly [presumably Dominicans] who still professed the opposite opinion." Dom Prosper Guéranger, *On the Immaculate Conception*, trans. a nun of St. Cecelia's Abbey, Ryde (Farnborough, Hampshire: Saint Michael's Abbey Press, 2006 [French original 1850]), 25. Trent did, however, explicitly exempt Mary from its decree on original sin, which held that all the children of Adam had fallen under its curse: "Declarat tamen haec ipsa sancta Synodus non esse suae intentionis comprehendere in hoc decreto, ubi de peccato originali agitur, Beatam et Immaculatam Virginem Mariam, Dei Genitricem." *Session V decretum de peccato originali*.

18. Thus I disagree with E. M. Mascall, who claims, "The controversy is largely an academic one." E. M. Mascall, *The Importance of Being Human* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 92–93. For a brief account of the medieval debate between Thomas and Scotus on the Immaculate Conception, see Paul Haffner, *The Mystery of Mary* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2004), 81–89; a fuller account can be found in the monograph of Hugolinus Storff, O.F.M., *The Immaculate Conception: The Teaching of St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure and Bl. J. Duns Scotus on the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (San Francisco: St. Francis Press, 1925). That Fr. Storff was already able to call Scotus "Blessed" in 1925, when in fact he would not be beatified by Pope John Paul II until 1992, must be due to the author's clairvoyance.

the more is this true of the predestination of that soul [Christ's] which was destined beforehand to possess the very highest glory possible.¹⁹

For the Subtle Doctor it inexorably followed that the manner of Christ's birth had to be aboriginally predestined too, making his mother thereby the premier example of the elect of the human race. Furthermore, among the important implications of the Scotist doctrine of the priority of Christ is that *sin was never part of the original predestining intention of God when he created the world*, a point that would come to be increasingly appreciated by Catholic theologians in the twentieth century, as we can see by the example of the Franciscan theologian Jean-François Bonnefoy:

The place of Mary in the divine plan appears more and more clearly in proportion as the eminence of her grace is grasped by the Christian sense. Here again, the Scotistic school has shown itself to be consistent. If by the fullness of her grace and her divine maternity, the blessed Virgin is situated immediately after Christ in the ontological order, then she must be accorded the same place in the order of predestinations [*sic*]. *Her destiny was decided even before*, according to our human but quite valid way of thinking, *there was any question of Adam or of the foresight and permission of sin*. There was, then, no real reason to subject her to the law of original sin, and her Immaculate Conception flows logically from the priority of her predestination as it is conceived and propounded by the Scotistic school.²⁰

This passage deftly captures the reasoning behind the official definition of the doctrine by Pope Pius IX in his 1854 Apostolic Letter *Ineffabilis Deus* infallibly decreeing the truth of Mary's Immaculate Conception. The definition is, of course, well known, but less well known is the pope's Scotist reasoning. Admittedly, its most famous passage speaks of Christ's exclusive role as redeemer (thereby foreclosing any implication that Mary might have some salvific role independent of her Son), as here: "We declare, pronounce, and define that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, at the first instant of her Conception, was preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin, by the singular grace and privilege of the Omnipotent God in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind."²¹

But earlier in the encyclical, in his exposition of the traditional provenance of the doctrine, the pope notes how the church's liturgy has regularly used passages from the Wisdom writings of the Old Testament on feasts of

19. John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, d. 7 q.3. The full Latin text with facing English translation can be found in Allan Wolter, "John Duns Scotus on the Primacy and Personality of Christ," in *Franciscan Christology*, ed. Damian McElrath (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1980): 139–82; here 147, 149; italics added.

20. Jean-François Bonnefoy, O.F.M., *The Immaculate Conception in the Divine Plan*, trans. Michael D. Meilach, O.F.M. (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1967), 13; emphasis added.

21. Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, paragraph 39, text in *Mary Immaculate: The Bull Ineffabilis Dei [sic] of Pope Pius IX*, trans. Dominic J. Unger (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1946), 21.

the Virgin. Tellingly, the Scotists also often used passages that speak of Uncreated Wisdom to justify their position that Christ was always intended to assume his role as firstborn of creation from all eternity, irrespective of the contingency of sin. For the pope, too, the use of the same Wisdom passages in liturgies celebrating the Virgin means the same logic of predestination applies to her as well, from which fact Pius draws this conclusion:

For this reason, the very words by which the Sacred Scriptures speak of Uncreated Wisdom, and by which they represent his eternal origin, the Church has been accustomed to use not only in the ecclesiastical Office [that is, the Liturgy of the Hours or Breviary] but also in the Sacred Liturgy itself [the Mass], applying them to this Virgin's origin. *For her origin was preordained by one and the same decree with the Incarnation of Divine Wisdom.*²²

In other words, Mary's Immaculate Conception both illuminates the doctrines of predestination, election, and *sola gratia* and also depends on them for its justification. Moreover, using this same Scotist reasoning, predestination is now seen as logically prior to the contingency of sin. This priority, in turn, entails the final conclusion that *God's predestination of Christ and Mary precedes God's predestination of the elect and reprobate at the end of time, indeed precedes God's permissive will allowing the sin of our first parents and their progeny.*

Those familiar with Karl Barth's Christology will spot this early papal adumbration of his own theology of predestination, although Barth would, of course, apply that papal insight solely to Christ's predestination. His own way of overturning the teaching of Augustine and Calvin on double predestination is through Christ's atonement on the cross. For Barth, the predestination of Christ to be simultaneously priest and victim means that Christ is simultaneously both elect and reprobate (2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13). Nonetheless, the convergence between the new Catholic understanding of predestination catalyzed by the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception and Barth's revolutionary Protestant interpretation is real, for both now see that the doctrine of *predestination subserves Christology* and does not operate as a separate motivation in God's eternal counsels before the creation of the world and independent of Christ. Barth's Scotist logic is especially evident here:

By virtue of this primal decision [of predestining Christ], God is in every way a gracious God. The doctrine of election tells us that we may be certain that God's self-determination is identical with his decision to turn to us. And this turn toward us is the best thing that could ever happen, for *Jesus Christ himself is the reality and the revelation of this turn*, which means that it is both eternal and yet encompasses our temporal lives. . . . And this holds true for all God's ways and works without exception. There is no

22. *Ineffabilis Deus*, paragraph 6, in *Mary Immaculate*, 3; emphasis added.

created nature that does not have its being, essence and continued existence from grace or that can be known in any other way but through grace.

Sin and death, the devil and hell, God's permissive will and knowledge, his power to negate, do not form exceptions to this doctrine. For God's will and knowledge are gracious even where he works his will by negating and denying (or permitting). God's foes are also his servants—and thus the servants of his grace. . . . God remains gracious even in his denial of grace [*Ungnade*]. . . . The doctrine of election testifies that God's grace is the origin of all his works and ways. It is therefore the "common denominator" that cannot be ignored throughout the rest of the arithmetical operation, for it is the numeral that makes the rest of the addition add up.²³

Catholics, of course, would insist that without a correlative confession of Mary's Immaculate Conception, the "arithmetic" of God's logic also does not add up. How, then, can Paul's line that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23) be interpreted? First, one would have to insist that, unless Paul was specifically thinking of the mother of Jesus in this context, the verse is not probative. To take an example from a much different and rather offbeat topic: it has often been asserted that if extraterrestrial intelligence should ever be discovered, this would prove to be a body blow to Christocentrism; for how could Christ be the savior of the *universe* if he could never be known by other *worlds*?²⁴

To maintain Christocentrism in this scenario of a discovered exo-intelligence, one could always cite Scripture to answer the question: "[Christ] is the atoning sacrifice for our sins; and not only for our sins but the sins of the whole world [*holou tou kosmou*]" (1 John 2:2). But what does *kosmos* mean here in this context: *our* world or the world of extraterrestrial intelligent life? Since the question never arose in the first century, the verse, taken alone, cannot be probative. But clearly the Scotist doctrine of Christ's predestined priority does answer that question, since all of creation was aboriginally meant *for* Christ (Col 1:16b: "All things were created through him and for him"), which gives a retrospective plausibility to the interpretation that holds that Christ's atoning sacrifice applies to all conceivable worlds.²⁵

23. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. II.2: *The Doctrine of God*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, various translators (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 91–93; my translation; emphasis added.

24. This dilemma would become even more exigent if some future human astronauts were to discover an exo-civilization on another planet that had long died out.

25. Thomas, as we saw, was at the very least diffident toward the priority of the Incarnation independent of the contingency of sin, and grew increasingly so; thus this Scotist answer is blocked for him. Oddly, though, he does address the question of other worlds and is (to the best of my knowledge) the first to do so, although he addresses the question not so much from Christology as from his Pneumatology, and does so in one of the most charming things he ever said, as Matthew Lamb explains: "In commenting on John 3:34 'For he gives the Spirit without measure,' Aquinas makes the startling affirmation that the grace of Christ is not only more than sufficient to save the entire world, but that it is more than sufficient to save 'even many worlds, if they were to exist' (*In Joan.* 3, lect. 6, n.

Similarly, since Paul was clearly not thinking of the Immaculate Conception (one way or the other) at Rom 3:23, other considerations have to be brought to bear, especially his line that Christ wants to present his church to himself “as a radiant Church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Eph 5:27). Such ecclesial purity does not currently obtain, of course; but that is surely the church Christ *intends* and was accordingly instantiated at the first moment of the earthly existence of his mother, who thereby becomes the church’s truest identity.

This Catholic use of Ephesians to illuminate (if not exactly justify) the dogma of Mary’s Immaculate Conception highlights the two issues that most divide Catholics and Protestants on this specific doctrine: the place of Scripture in theological argumentation and ecclesiology. As to the first issue, the real dividing line, at least as pertains to Mariology, is not just the Protestant *sola scriptura* principle over against the Catholic countenancing of tradition, but also the “ditch” that separates ancient and modern methods of interpreting the Bible.²⁶ Pelikan rightly observes that just as the Church Fathers and medieval theologians universally interpreted the Old Testament christologically, so too they also applied the same method to Mariology:

For with their belief in the unity of the Bible, where “the New Testament is hidden in the Old and the Old becomes visible in the New [*Novum in Vetere patet, Vetus in Novo latet*], and with the consequent ability to toggle effortlessly from one Testament to the other and from fulfillment to prophecy and back again, biblical interpreters throughout most of Christian history have had available to them a vast body of supplementary material to make up for the embarrassing circumstance that, as quoted earlier, “the reader of the gospels is at first surprised to find so little about Mary.”²⁷

We have already seen an example of this type of holistic interpretation in Pius IX’s encyclical *Ineffabilis Deus*, which relies so heavily on the Wisdom books of the Old Testament, but traditional use of typology ranged much further than just the Wisdom literature:

If “son of David” was in the language of the Gospels a way of affirming the continuity of Jesus Christ with Israel and the continuity of his kinship

544).” Matthew Lamb, “Eternity and Time in St. Thomas Aquinas’s Lectures on St. John’s Gospel,” in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology*, ed. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005): 127–39; here 127. (There is a typo in the text: Lamb gives the passage as John 3:24, but it is in fact located at John 3:34.)

26. For a riveting account of how this “ditch” came to be dug, see Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

27. Pelikan, *Mary through the Centuries*, 23. The internal quote is from Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and John Reumann, eds., *Mary in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 29.

with that of his celebrated forefather, then his descent from David had to be through his only human parent, Mary, who must then also have been “of the house and lineage of David.” That reasoning has provided the justification for the practice of going far beyond and behind the New Testament, by searching through the ancient Scriptures of Israel for prophecies and parallels, topics and typologies, that would enrich and amplify the tiny sheaf of data from the Gospels: Miriam, sister of Moses, of course, because of her name, but also Mother Eve; and then all the female personifications, above all in the writings carrying the name of King Solomon, particularly the figure of Wisdom in the eighth chapter of the Book of Proverbs . . . and the Bride in the Song of Songs, which was the longest and the most lavish portrait of a woman anywhere in the Bible.²⁸

In other words, whenever the principle of *sola scriptura* is invoked, the question immediately arises: not so much *which* Scripture (since most of the Old Testament passages used in traditional Mariology are recognized by both Catholics and Protestants, the Wisdom of Solomon being the chief exception), but rather *how* the Old Testament relates to the New Testament, which is a point that the mere invocation of *sola scriptura* cannot settle—as the dispute between Lutherans and Calvinists on just that point proves. By a similar logic, nothing in the principle of *sola scriptura* forbids us, as a principle, from noticing the typological parallels and reversals between, say, Eve and Mary, any more than it forbids us from recognizing the similarities and differences between Moses and Jesus.

At all events, there can be no question that the biblical justification for the dogma of the Immaculate Conception stands or falls with the admission of the typological interpretation of the Old Testament, as again Pelikan rightly notes:

The process of appropriating this material for the purposes of Marian devotion and doctrine, which may be described as a methodology of amplification, was, on one hand, part of the much larger process of allegorical and figurative interpretations of the Bible, to which we owe some of the most imaginative and beautiful commentaries, in words and in pictures, in all of Medieval and Byzantine culture. It was, on the other hand, and almost against the intentions of those who practiced it, a powerful affirmation that because Mary was . . . “of the house and lineage of David,” she represented the unbreakable link between Jewish and Christian history, between the First Covenant *within* which she was born and the Second Covenant *to* which she gave birth, so that even the most virulent of Christian anti-Semites could not deny that she, the most blessed among women, was a Jew.²⁹

28. Pelikan, *Mary through the Centuries*, 24–25.

29. Pelikan, *Mary through the Centuries*, 25.

Mary thus stands athwart any and all Marcionite tendencies in theology: for she establishes in her own person—as daughter of Zion and simultaneously as Mother of the Church—the crucial hinge, who both links Old and New Covenants and marks their transition from the former to the latter. If the history of Israel serves as God’s preparation to make the world ready for his Son (as for the New Testament it clearly does), then Mary’s role as the New Eve *embodies* that transition in her own person, first in her life as a pious Jew and, above all, in her predestined role of giving birth to our Savior.

Furthermore (and this point is crucial), medieval theologians explicitly invoked predestination to justify their application of key passages from the Old Testament to Mary, and did so well before Scotus, indeed centuries before Thomas was born, especially when they came to interpret this verse: “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made anything from the beginning” (Prov 8:22), a point lucidly described by an art historian:

The idea of the predestination of Mary was one of the earliest ideas forwarded in the West by Immaculist writers to explain Mary’s exemption from Original Sin. The idea of an Original Grace, counteracting the curse brought on mankind by the Original Sin of Adam and Eve, is *already forwarded in the fifth century* by St. Maxim of Turin. And the passages from Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiasticus quoted above found their way into the liturgy of the feast of the Immaculate Conception from early times.³⁰

In other words, without a robust Scotist interpretation of Mary’s predestination, the justification for the typological application of Old Testament Wisdom language to Mary collapses, but with that concept it gains new plausibility.

Finally, there is the ecclesiological issue. Catholics, as we saw above, tend to look askance at any ecclesiology that sees the spotless and pure church located only in the predestined heavenly Jerusalem without any material instantiation in the church below, composed though it truly is of saints and sinners (a dolorous reality that recent headlines confirm, if nothing else does). Despite that ongoing sinfulness of the empirical church, though, the Catholic sensibility resists a bifurcated ecclesiology and is resolutely incarnational, all the way from the Catholic under-

30. Mirella Levi D’Ancona, *The Iconography of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance* (New York: College Art Association of America, 1957), 51; emphasis added. She goes on to note that “Proverbs 8:22–23 was part of the Office of the Nativity of the Virgin in the twelfth century, when Godefridus, Abbot of Admont in Syria, asks himself why this text, which refers to Divine Wisdom, is used in reference to the Virgin Mary as well. His answer is that Mary was foreseen from eternity and that she existed in the mind of God as an idea, in the exact way in which she was to appear as a living being in the world after her birth” (51).

standing of Jesus as the enfleshed Son of God to the church as the very body of that same enfleshed Christ. The church is, accordingly, the continuation of his enfleshment.³¹

I do not propose to resolve that ecclesiological issue here, for it goes back to the central issues of the Reformation: the dispute over the kind of change effected by justification (real or forensic), the role of merit in the life of a Christian (necessary or otiose), how much Christians are expected to reflect a life of holiness in their lives in order to make their religion plausible to their non-Christian neighbors (the classical tension between justification and sanctification), all topics too large to be addressed here. But here again I refer back to my initial thesis: that the grace given to Mary at her conception is the quintessential example of unmerited grace.

In that light, one cannot help but detect a new appreciation for how unmerited *all* grace really is. Often because of an overreaction to the Reformation, Catholics have, in their stress on merit, tended to lose sight of Augustine's oft-repeated maxim: *tua merita sunt dona Dei*. But if Mary is the "Mother of Graces" (in the language of the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, who says that Mary "but mothers each new grace / That does now reach our race"), then that must mean that she mothers *unmerited* grace. For what is grace but that which we do not, and cannot, merit?

Like the rest of mankind, we were sons of wrath. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ. . . . For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; and this not from yourselves, it is God's gift—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we

31. One example of this sensibility will suffice, taken from some recent remarks penned by the Catholic historian Eamon Duffy: "Christianity is a material religion. Its central tenet is that in the man Jesus the eternal God united himself to human nature and human flesh, and thereby opened both humanity and matter itself to the possibility of divinization. So Christians place their eschatological hope not in the survival of a disembodied soul, but in the resurrection of the body, the transformation into another order of being of the whole person, flesh and spirit. In heaven Christ himself retains his body, glorified and transcendent, but bearing still the physical traces of his human suffering. 'With what rapture,' says Charles Wesley's great hymn, 'gaze we on those glorious scars.' Perhaps the most unabashedly materialist form of Christianity is Catholicism, centered around the sacraments, and making material things—bread, wine, water, olive oil, the touch of human hands—vehicles of divine power. In the Mass, Catholics believe, Christ himself is made present in the elements of bread and wine, to nourish and transform those who eat and drink them. Catholics venerate the relics of the holy dead, they bless material *stuff*—water, salt, oil, wax, medals, holy pictures, palm branches—and the formulas traditionally used in such blessings more often than not implied that those objects, called sacramentals, thereby became *objectively* holy, changed in themselves, and capable of effecting change at the material as well as the spiritual level." Eamon Duffy, "Sacred Bones and Blood," review of *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe*, by Caroline Walker Bynum, *New York Review of Books* 58, no. 13 (August 18, 2011): 66–68; here 68; Duffy's italics.

are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Eph 2:3c–4, 8–10)

It is that last verse of this passage from Ephesians that legitimates occasional Catholic talk of Mary's "merit" in being given the grace to bear the incarnate Son of God, as in the famous hymn *Regina caeli*, which asks the Queen of Heaven to rejoice, "for he whom thou didst merit to bear, alleluia, is risen as he said, alleluia."³² This language, far from countenancing any "works-righteousness," points to the fact that under grace, decisions are not coerced but remain entirely free, precisely *because* they are graced decisions.³³ Thus, while good works are expected of the Christian, as Paul insists, they do not entail any claim on God, the same point already made in Mary's Magnificat: "[The Lord] has looked on the lowliness of his servant. Henceforth all generations will call me blessed, *because* the Almighty has done great things for me" (Luke 1:46–49).

Thérèse de Lisieux, the most popular Catholic saint of the twentieth century and named Doctor of the Church by Pope John Paul II in 1997, exemplified this Marian stance to an extraordinary degree. In her remarkable autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, she recounts her prayer four months before her difficult death: "I am very happy that I am going to heaven; but when I think of this word of the Lord, 'I shall come soon, and bring with me my recompense to give each one according to his works,' I tell myself that this will be very embarrassing for me *because I have no works*. . . . Very well, he will render to me according to *his* works for his own sake."³⁴ The Little Flower's is precisely the attitude that suffuses the Magnificat, whose whole thrust may be summarized as gratitude for unmerited grace.

In conclusion, perhaps enough has been outlined here to give encouragement. While much continues to divide Catholics and Protestants, very much including the doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception, nonetheless there are enough resources in that doctrine and in the reasoning that led to its solemn declaration to make us see why the Protestant poet William Wordsworth could call Mary "our tainted nature's solitary boast."

32. "Regina caeli, laetare, alleluia: Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia, resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia."

33. This point was effaced by the Jansenists, who evaded Augustine's correlative stress on true freedom and who thus came to their grim doctrine of double predestination and limited atonement: "Grace [for Augustine] never fails of the effect which God intends it to cause, because God is omniscience; but that effect is a free act of man. . . . It is not characteristic of a free man to choose slavery: 'freedom to sin' is a contradiction in terms." Nigel Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1936), 39.

34. Cited in Hans Küng, *Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection*, trans. Thomas Collins et al. (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964), 274; emphases added. Her whole family had a deep devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes, and although she never went to Lourdes herself, her mother and three of her sisters did. For details on the trip, and on the general Carmelite eschewal of any talk of "merit," see Thomas R. Nevin, *Thérèse of Lisieux: God's Gentle Warrior* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 108–11; 113–18.



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