

## The 19th Century

The first thirty years of the nineteenth century are perhaps the most barren in the history of Marian literature. Books are rare and mediocre. And yet the impulse springs up again suddenly in new and surprising forms.

First there is an apparition in 1830, the first in a long series that will characterize the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> The Virgin Mary gave the image of the Miraculous Medal to Catherine Labouré. The fact remained hidden but it led to a vast movement of devotion and conversion. Under the sign of the Miraculous Medal the Virgin appeared to Alphonse Ratisbonne. This medal — the Virgin “conceived without sin,” with arms outstretched downward — seemed to set forth the program that was to guide the Marian movement for a whole century: Mary’s Immaculate Conception and her Mediation.

Inaugurated by an apparition, the period was prolonged in a definition. In 1854 the Immaculate Conception was declared a dogma of the faith.<sup>24</sup> The infallible pronouncement came upon a theology that had not yet shown any sign of renewal. The effort of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries seemed to have been forgotten for the while, and that of the nineteenth century was still negligible. Before defining the dogma Pius IX consulted the bishops as to the sentiment prevailing in the Church. But the theological work of preparation had not proceeded very far. There was hardly more than one general work of theology that represented if not a strict method, at least an effort of considerable scope; and its author, Carlo Passaglia,<sup>25</sup> who introduced Scheeben

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23. Earlier apparitions of the 16th–17th century are known: Guadalupe (Mexico), Le Laus, Garaison (France), etc. But these apparitions had not begun any extensive movement, except perhaps in the case of Guadalupe.

24. The acts preparing for the definition were published by V. Sardi, *La solenne definizione del dogma dell’ Immacolato concepimento di Maria Santissima. Atti e documenti . . .*, Rome, Vaticana, 1904–1905, 2 vols.

25. Cf. “Passaglia,” DTC 11:2207–2210. More lucid perhaps, but less

to Mariology, eventually broke off relations with the Holy See over the Roman question.

In short, throughout this disconcerting period, when the Church was weakened and threatened and in so many respects was without the intellectual resources she needed, all initiative came from on top, and the quality of inspiration was often recognizable in the negligible achievements of the time. A charismatic outburst preceded the doctrinal and literary revival. As has been mentioned, the beginning of the century was markedly lacking in works on Our Lady. Then suddenly there was a shift about 1840 to an even more distressing proliferation. About this literature, the overabundance of which was only "its least serious fault," Louis Veuillot had the following to say:

"In the mass of volumes turned out each year there are hardly more than a few that do not leave everything to be desired: awkward and sterile declamation, ill-chosen texts, readings that are without doctrine, without love, and too often without grammar. It is astonishing that the zeal of those who read these wretched things is such a poor inspiration to those who write them."<sup>26</sup>

The whole religious drama of the nineteenth century lies exposed there. It is a time when deep and fervent piety is nourished with a tastelessly diluted literature and a deplorable art.

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documented, than the work of Passaglia is that of J. Perrone, *De Immaculato conceptu. An dogmatico decreto definiri possit?* Avignon, 1848 (numerous reeditions in different places), and especially the small book of Dom P. Guéranger, *Mémoire sur la question de l'Immaculée Conception*, Paris, Lecoffre, 1850. Guéranger was the author of one of the eight projects of dogmatic definition (March 1852): cf. G. Frenaud, "Dom Guéranger at le projet de bulle 'Quemadmodum Ecclesia' pour la definition de l'Immaculée Conception," *Virgo Immaculata* 2 (1956), pp. 337-386.

26. L. Veuillot, *Mélanges, 2<sup>e</sup> série*, Paris, Gaume, 1860, t. 5, pp. 605-606.

Throughout the nineteenth century theology remained enfeebled, with the exception of trailblazers unrecognized in their day: Newman<sup>27</sup> in England (1866) and Scheeben<sup>28</sup> in Germany. It is disappointing to read today the Mariologists who were then in vogue. Even the widely read Msgr. Malou<sup>29</sup> startles one when, for example, he calls Mary "a divine person," or "the fourth person of the Holy Trinity," — all that "according to the Fathers," without any reference being given. And one readily understands why not!

### From 1900 to 1958

In spite of these weaknesses the Marian movement held its own. Theology even ended up by making some advance in Marian questions. At the beginning of the twentieth century

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27. Cf. the bibliography on this author in Laurentin, *Marie, l'Eglise* . . . vol. 1, p. 397, n. 31, and Besutti, *Bibliografia mariana* 2 (1952), # 1068, 1113, 1223, 1224, 1628; 3 (1959), # 1071-1077, 1427, 1428, 1727, 2631, 5309, 5468, 5522.

28. Scheeben's Mariology is an integral part of the third volume of his dogmatic synthesis, *Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik*, Freiburg/Breisgau, Herder, 1882, # 274-282; cf. also # 229-231, 240. (In the new edition by Carl Feckes, *Katholische Dogmatik*, Freiburg/Breisgau, Herder, 1955, vol. 1, pp. 243-266, 335-359, and especially vol. 2, pp. 306-499.) Noteworthy also is the English translation of Scheeben's chapters on Mariology by T. Geukers, *Mariology*, London, Herder, 1948, and two volumes of an abbreviated adaptation of Feckes' edition of Scheeben's works, translated by A. Kerkvoorde, under the title, *M. J. Scheeben, la Mère virginale du Sauveur*, Paris, Desclée, 1954.

For studies on Scheeben cf. C. Feckes, "M. J. Scheeben, théologien de la mariologie moderne," *Maria* 3 (1954), pp. 553-571 (with bibliography), and J. Galot, "La nouvelle Eve d'après Scheeben," *EM* 14 (1956), pp. 49-66. Further bibliography in G. Besutti, *Bibliografia mariana* 3 (1959), # 1059-1068. Earlier bibliographies contained no monograph on this author; the current of interest in his Mariology began toward 1935 with C. Feckes, *Scientia sacra. Theologische Festgabe*, Düsseldorf, 1935, pp. 252-276; E. Druwé, article in *EM* 2 (1936), pp. 9, 12, 16, etc.

29. J. Malou, *L'Immaculée Conception*, Brussels, 1857, pp. 175-176.