
The Stance of the Dominicans Towards the Immaculate Conception of Mary on the Example of Selected Scripts (13th-16th Centuries)

La postura de los dominicos ante la cuestión de la Inmaculada Concepción de María a partir del ejemplo de escrituras seleccionadas (siglos XIII-XVI)

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Abstract: This study entitled “The Stance of the Dominicans Towards the Immaculate Conception of Mary on the Example of Selected Scripts (13th-16th Centuries)” aims to answer the question of how great the influence of St. Thomas’ position on the opinions of Dominican theologians regarding the analyzed issue was. It examines the negative and homogeneous position adopted by the Dominicans, revealing its foundations and the presence of the theological perspective indicated by St. Thomas Aquinas.

Keywords: Thomas Aquinas, Dominicans, Immaculate Conception of Mary, Sanctification of Mary, Authority.

Resumen: El presente estudio, titulado “La postura de los dominicos ante la Inmaculada Concepción de María a partir del ejemplo de textos seleccionados (siglos XIII-XVI)” pretende responder a la pregunta de cuán grande fue la influencia de la postura de santo Tomás en las opiniones de los teólogos dominicos respecto a la cuestión analizada. Se examina la postura negativa y homogénea adoptada por los dominicos, revelando sus fundamentos y la presencia de la perspectiva teológica indicada por santo Tomás de Aquino.

Palabras clave: Santo Tomás de Aquino, Dominicos, Inmaculada Concepción de María, Santificación de María, Autoridad.

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INTRODUCTION

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin has been the subject of many historical studies, in which attention was paid either to its gradual development or to the contribution of individual theologians and theological schools in the crystallization of this truth¹. Among the many published research papers, there is no thorough analysis of the position that the Dominicans have taken on this issue over the centuries, although studies devoted to selected issues or views of Dominican theologians on the Immaculate Conception of Mary should be noted².

¹ The most recent studies in this regard include: GAY-CANTON, R., *Entre dévotion et théologie scolastique. Réceptions de la controverse médiévale autour de l'Immaculée Conception en pays germaniques*, Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2011; KRUPA, P., *Une grave querelle. L'Université de Paris, les Mendiants et la Conception Immaculée de la Vierge (1387-1390)*, Warszawa: Instytut Tomistyczny, 2013; LAMY, M., *L'Immaculée Conception. Étapes et enjeux d'une controverse au Moyen Âge (XII-XV siècles)*, Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2000; CECCHIN, S. (ed.), *La "Scuola francescana" e l'Immacolata concezione. Atti del congresso mariologico francescano. Assisi, 4-8 dicembre 2003*, Città del Vaticano: Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis, 2005; CECCHIN, S., *L'Immacolata Concezione. Breve storia del dogma*, Città del Vaticano: Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis, 2003.

² Today, B. Binnebesel's pioneering work requires numerous additions and corrections. See: BINNEBESEL, B., *Die Stellung der Theologen des Dominikanerordens zur Frage nach der Unbefleckten Empfängnis Marias bis zum Konzil von Basel*, Kallmünz bei Regensburg: Verlag Michael Laßleben, 1934. R. Masson's work, although dedicated to Dominican supporters of the Immaculate Conception, in most cases lists the positions of opponents of the Marian privilege. Furthermore, references to the writings of Dominican proponents of the Immaculate Conception are insufficiently documented. See: MASSON, R., «Les dominicains favorables à l'Immaculée Conception de Marie», in *Virgo Immacula. Acta Congressus Internationalis Mariologici et Mariani Romae anno MCMLIC celebrati*, vol. VI, Romae: Academia Mariana Internationalis, 1955, 175-186. Salvatore Di Francesco emphasizing the influence of St. Thomas Aquinas, presented the principles of Aquinas' theology in relation to the doctrine promulgated by Pius IX in 1854, forgetting about other scholastic theologians who interpreted God's Revelation in a similar way. See: DI FRANCESCO, S., «Influsso del Dottore s. Tommaso d'Aquino nello sviluppo della dottrina sull'Immacolata Concezione della Beatissima Vergine Maria», in *Virgo Immacula. Acta Congressus Internationalis Mariologici et Mariani Romae anno MCMLIC celebrati*, vol. VI, Romae: Academia Mariana Internationalis, 1955, 136-145. Kochaniewicz's article presents the position of St. Thomas in the context of the views of the 13th-14th century Dominicans. Cfr. KOCHANIEWICZ, B., «L'Immacolata Concezione e la dottrina di San Tommaso d'Aquino», in CECCHIN, S. (dir.), *La "Scuola francescana" e l'Immacolata Concezione*, Città del Vaticano: Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis, 2005, 87-140. The contemporary studies of Ulrich Horst are of interest. In order to present methodological issues, he focused on Dominican theologians of the 15th and 16th centuries, while marginalizing the role of Dominicans from the 13th and 14th centuries. HORST, U., *Die Diskussion um die Immacolata Conceptio im Dominikanerorden. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der theologischen Methode*, Paderborn-München-Wien-Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1987; HORST, U., *Dogma und Theologie. Dominikanertheologen in den Kontroversen um die Immacolata Conceptio*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens, Neue Folge Band 16, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2009.

One of the many issues requiring analysis is the answer to the question about the possible impact of St. Thomas Aquinas' stand on the opinions of Dominican theologians regarding the investigated issue. Another purpose of the research project is to scrutinize the views of theologians from the Order of Preachers (*Ordo Praedicatorum*) and to demonstrate the extent to which their position was coherent and homogeneous – as is commonly believed today. Theological writings became the subject of analysis, especially commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard, which reflect the views of scholastic theology. Due to the amount of the source material, the area of research was narrowed to the writings of Dominican theologians (13th-16th centuries) associated with the Apennine Peninsula, supplemented with works by authors from other Dominican provinces in Europe at that time. It seems that examining the isolated writings will allow us to find the answer to the questions posed above.

1. AUTHORITY OF SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

To understand the position taken by the Dominicans, it is necessary to study the authority that St. Thomas Aquinas' doctrine had in the Dominican Order from the very beginning. Only a few years after Aquinas' death, his teaching is defended by general assemblies of the Dominicans. On the other hand, it is a reaction to the condemnation of Thomas' sixteen theses in 1277 by the bishop of Paris and thirty others, selected by Robert Kilwardby, archbishop of Cantenbury³. The response to criticism of certain aspects of the doctrine reveals the authority that Aquinas' doctrine enjoyed throughout the Dominican Order.

In this context, it is not surprising that the issue became the subject of deliberations of the Dominican general chapter. The fathers, who gathered in Paris in 1279, forbade Dominicans to criticize Aquinas' doctrine, while ordering their superiors (provincials, priors) to punish those who would do so⁴. Seven years later (1286), the Dominicans meeting in the same city not only forbade their brothers to criticize Thomas Aquinas' doctrine, but also ordered

³ WEISHEIPL, J. A., *Tomasz z Akwinu, Życie, myśli dzieło*, Poznań: W drodze, 1985, 416; TWOMEY, L. K., *The Serpent and the Rose. The Immaculate Conception and Hispanic Poetry in the Late Medieval Period*, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2008.

⁴ *Acta Capituli Generalis Parisius celebrati anno Domini MCCLXXIX*, in FRÜHWIRTH, A. (ed.), *Acta Capitulum Generalium Ordinis Praedicatorum*, vol. I, Romae: Typografia della Propaganda Fidei, 1898, 204.

them to preach his teaching⁵. This order was associated with certain criminal penalties. All those who would oppose this decision were threatened with the penalty of suspension, the removal of which was reserved only for the general of the order or the general chapter⁶. The command to preach St. Thomas' doctrine shows that the Dominicans recognized its great value, with which they wished to enrich the Church of that time. Subsequent resolutions of Dominican general chapters follow this direction, for example resolutions of the chapter of Metz (1313), which recognized Aquinas' teachings as a doctrine 'sounder and more universal than all others'. This statement shows the Dominicans' perception of Thomas' teachings against the background of other doctrines present in the Church at that time. Conversely, this record bears witness to the identification of the Dominican Order with the Aquinas' doctrine already at the beginning of the 14th century. At the same time, it should be noted that the resolutions of the chapter of Metz are important for yet another reason. Namely, the Dominicans deliberating at the chapter decided that from now on the Dominican Order was committed to being guided by St. Thomas Aquinas. Therefore, the commandment that no Dominican 'dared to teach, settle questions, or respond to accusations otherwise than in accordance with what was commonly interpreted as his teaching' resonated very strongly⁷. In this resolution, the tendency to absolutize Aquinas' teaching appears for the first time, while rejecting cognition of other positions in order to be able to creatively formulate answers and conclusions. For while Thomas in his works juxtaposed many issues to which he sought answers in various sources (Holy Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, philosophers – Aristotle, Plato, Plotinus, Averroes), the Dominicans, from that moment onward, increasingly focused on relying on Thomas as the sole and primary source, thus departing from the fundamental method of truth-seeking that guided Aquinas. This will have enormous consequences in the way Dominicans practice theology in the following centuries.

The influence of Aquinas' canonization, proclaimed on July 18, 1323 by John XXII, on the increasing importance of his doctrine cannot be over-

⁵ *Acta Capituli Generalis Parisius celebrati anno Domini MCCLXXXVI*, in FRÜHWIRTH, A. (ed.), *Acta Capitulorum Generalium Ordinis Praedicatorum*, vol. I, 235.

⁶ WEISHEIPL, J. A., *Tomasz z Akwinu. Życie, myśl i dzieło*, Poznań: W drodze, 1985, 424.

⁷ *Acta Capituli Generalis apud Methim celebrati anno Domini MCCCXIII*, in FRÜHWIRTH, A. (ed.), *Acta Capitulorum Generalium Ordinis Praedicatorum*, vol. II, Romae: Typografia della Propaganda Fidei, 1899, 64-65.

looked. Although the bull 'Redemptionem misit' glorifies three hundred miracles of the new saint and to a small extent emphasizes the intellectual achievements of Thomas⁸, as Jean Pierre Torrell noted, 'the intellectual dimension of holiness has not been taken into account so far'⁹.

At the general chapter in Sisteron (Cistaricum) in 1329, it was resolved that since the doctrine of St. Thomas was useful to the whole world, Dominican students should study the teachings of St. Thomas while lecturers should base their classes on the above-mentioned doctrine¹⁰. These findings also echo the Dominicans' belief that Thomas' teachings are valuable and useful not only for the entire Order, but also for the entire world. This conviction translates into the obligation for Dominican students to study St. Thomas doctrine, and lecturers to base their classes on Aquinas' works. Thus, the Order arbitrarily narrowed the area of theological research to the doctrine of the Angelic Doctor. Beginning with the decisions of the chapter of 1329, Dominican theology is based on the only one, though coherent system. It seems, therefore, that the resolutions of the general chapters allowed the Order to maintain its identity over the centuries, taking into account the education of the friars within one philosophical and theological system.

The records of successive general chapters, following the established direction, encourage theology students to learn St. Thomas' doctrine, while avoiding trivial and frivolous news¹¹. The authority that Aquinas' teachings enjoyed in the Order was evidenced by the resolutions of the Bologna chapter, prohibiting Dominicans from selling books containing St. Thomas' works¹². The importance and value of St. Thomas' doctrine was reiterated for the entire Church by the Dominicans at the general chapter in Carcassonne in 1342¹³.

⁸ TORRELL, J. P., *Wprowadzenie w św. Tomasza z Akwinu. Osoba i dzieło*, Poznań-Warszawa: W drodze-Institut Tomistyczny, 2021, 450.

⁹ TORRELL, J. P., *Wprowadzenie w św. Tomasza z Akwinu*, 450.

¹⁰ *Acta Capituli Generalis apud Cistaricum celebrati anno Domini MCCCXXIX*, in FRÜHWIRTH, A. (ed.), *Acta Capitulum Generalium Ordinis Praedicatorum*, vol. II, 191.

¹¹ *Acta Capituli Generalis apud Mediolanum celebrati anno Domini MCCCXL*, in FRÜHWIRTH, A. (ed.), *Acta Capitulum Generalium Ordinis Praedicatorum*, vol. II, 262. Moreover: *Acta Capituli Generalis apud Carcassonam celebrati anno Domini MCCCXLII*, in FRÜHWIRTH, A. (ed.), *Acta Capitulum Generalium Ordinis Praedicatorum*, vol. II, 280.

¹² *Acta Capituli Generalis apud Bononiam celebrati anno Domini MCCCXV*, in FRÜHWIRTH, A. (ed.), *Acta Capitulum Generalium Ordinis Praedicatorum*, vol. II, 83.

¹³ *Acta Capituli Generalis apud Carcassonam celebrati anno Domini MCCCXLII*, in FRÜHWIRTH, A. (ed.), *Acta Capitulum Generalium Ordinis Praedicatorum*, vol. II, 280.

To trace the increase in authority of St. Thomas Aquinas' position on the circumstances of the conception of the Blessed Virgin present in the writings of subsequent Dominicans, it is necessary to present his views on the issue we are studying.

2. THE POSITION OF SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS ON THE SANCTIFICATION OF MARY

The Angelic Doctor analyzes the issue of interest in the *Commentary on the Sentences*¹⁴, in the *Summa Theologiae*¹⁵, in the *Summary of Theology*¹⁶ and in *Quaestiones quodlibetales*¹⁷. In order to provide a comprehensive answer, he considers three perspectives of this problem: before the soul unites with the body (*ante animationem*), at the moment of the soul's infusion (*in actu animationis*) and after the soul unites with the body (*post animationem*)¹⁸.

a) Sanctification of Mary before the union of body and soul

Aquinas, asking about the possibility of Her sanctification before the union of body and soul, gives a negative answer. He states that *what does not exist cannot be sanctified*¹⁹. Since the moment of the union body and soul determines the existence of a human being, the Blessed Virgin could not have been sanctified before Her existence²⁰.

A human being can be the subject of God's grace. Therefore, for sanctifying grace to be granted, Mary had to exist as a person²¹. This could not have happened earlier than before Her soul united with Her body²².

Thomas also considers the possibility of Mary's sanctification at the moment of the parents' marital act. He notes that parents' personal holiness can-

¹⁴ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, lib. 3, d. 3, q. 1, a. 1, in THOMAE AQUINATIS, *Scriptum super Sententiis* (ed. M. F. MOOS), vol. III, Parisiis: P. Lethielleux, 95-101.

¹⁵ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 27, 1995-2002.

¹⁶ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 224, in THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Opuscula omnia*, vol. II, Parisiis: P. Lethielleux, 1927, 168-170.

¹⁷ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Quodlibetum VI*, q. V, a. 7, in S. THOMAE AQUINATIS, *Quaestiones disputatae et quaestiones duodecim quodlibetales*, vol. III, Romae: Taurini, 1927, 124-125.

¹⁸ See: KOCHANIEWICZ, B., «L'Immacolata Concezione e la dottrina di San Tommaso d'Aquino», 100.

¹⁹ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, lib. 3, d. 3, q. 1, a. 1, q. 1, 95.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, lib. 3, d. 3, q. 1, a. 1, q. 1, 95.

²² THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, lib. 3, d. 3, q. 1, a. 1, q. 2, 97.

not be inherited by their offspring. Original sin refers to nature, while God's grace perfects the person. Therefore, the fruit of the marital act of holy parents cannot be holy offspring²³.

Aquinas also drew attention to the fact that lust, which accompanies the act of procreation and causes contamination with original sin, was not strange to Mary's parents. Therefore, not being excluded from the norms of this law, they passed on original sin to their daughter²⁴. Only the conception of Christ was holy and undefiled, since He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin²⁵.

Moreover, Aquinas' negative answer was justified by the universal dimension of Redemption. If the Blessed Virgin had been sanctified before the union of body and soul, She would not have had the need for Christ's redemption, and Christ would not have been the Saviour of all people²⁶.

b) *Sanctification at the moment of union of body and soul*

Next, Aquinas considers the possibility of Mary's sanctification at the moment of the union of body and soul in such a way that, thanks to the grace 'which was granted to Her, She was preserved from incurring original guilt'²⁷. Thomas rejects such a hypothesis, stating that only Christ the Redeemer of the human race is free from original sin²⁸. However, the Blessed Virgin like all the other people needed Redemption²⁹. Excluding the Blessed Virgin from the consequences of original sin would deny the universality of Redemption accomplished by Christ³⁰.

c) *Sanctification after the soul unites with the body of Mary*

After rejecting both hypotheses, the Angelic Doctor ponders the last possibility – the sanctification of Mary after conception, but before Her

²³ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, lib. 3, d. 3, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 1 ad 2, 99.

²⁴ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Compendium theologiae*, liber 1, cap. 224, in THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Opuscula omnia*, vol. II, Parisiis: P. Lethielleux, 1927, 169.

²⁵ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, lib. 3, d. 3, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 1, s. c. 2, 95.

²⁶ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 27, a. 2 co, Cinisello Balsamo: Edizioni Paoline, 1988, 1997.

²⁷ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, lib. 3, d. 3, q. 1, a. 1 sol. 1, 99.

²⁸ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, lib. 3, d. 3, q. 1, a. 1, q. 2, sol. 2, 99.

²⁹ KOCHANIEWICZ, B., «L'Immacolata Concezione e la dottrina di San Tommaso d'Aquino», 104.

³⁰ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 27, a. 2, 1997.

birth³¹. In explaining his position, he cited the examples of the prophets Jeremiah and John the Baptist, who were sanctified in their mothers' wombs³². However, if they, being purified from original sin, retained the possibility of committing venial sins, the Blessed Virgin, while in Her mother's womb, received grace which not only freed Her from original sin, but also preserved Her from both mortal and venial sins³³. The grace given to Mary meant that during Her earthly life She never committed any sin: neither grave nor venial³⁴. At the same time, Thomas emphasizes that despite Her sanctification, the source of sin (*fomes peccati*) remained. It was not active, hence it had no influence on the disordered stirrings of Mary's mind³⁵. The only person free from any source of sin was Jesus Christ. In Him, humanity achieved the state of original integrity before original sin³⁶.

3. THE POSITION OF OTHER DOMINICANS ON THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY

a) *The position of the Dominicans in the 13th century*

An analysis of the Dominicans' writings allows us to conclude that they addressed the question of Mary's sanctification to varying degrees. In addition to theological treatises in which a lot of attention is devoted to the issue of interest, the writings in which authors merely mention this subject have been preserved, thus revealing their position. This allows to provide a broader overview of the problem that is being studied.

Hanibaldus de Hannibaldis (+ 1272)

A similar position is taken by Hanibaldus de Hannibaldis³⁷, who noted that during Her first sanctification the Blessed Virgin was purified from original sin. In contrast, another fruit of this sanctification was the neutralization of

³¹ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 224, 170.

³² THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 27, a. 1, 1996.

³³ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Compendium theologiae*, liber 1, cap. 224, 170.

³⁴ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 27, a. 4, 1999.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 224, 170.

³⁷ LONGO, C., «Annibaldo degli Annibaldi», in *Lexicon. Dizionario dei Teologi*, Casale Montferrato: Piemme, 1998, 84.

fomes peccati, understood as an inclination to evil and difficulty in achieving good³⁸. It follows that Hannibaldus claimed the Blessed Virgin to have been conceived in original sin and then, thanks to God's grace, was purified from it³⁹.

Petrus de Tarantasia (Innocentius V) (+ 1276)

The Dominican of Tarantasia emphasized two moments of the Blessed Virgin's sanctification⁴⁰. During the first one, the soul was purified from the need to sin. However, in the effect of the second one, the Blessed Virgin was preserved from the possibility of committing sin⁴¹. The Dominican, considering participation in God's grace, drew attention to the hierarchical order. Only Christ was free from any sin, while the rest of people, although free from mortal sin, were contaminated with venial sin. The Blessed Virgin would occupy an intermediate position: although She was conceived in original sin, She never committed actual sin⁴². This type of solution is consistent with the position of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Bombolognus de Bologna (+ 13th/14th century)

The question of the sanctification of the Blessed Virgin was also reflected upon by the Dominican from Bologna⁴³. He stated that since sanctification was the result of God's grace being granted to the human soul (and not to the human body), the body of the Blessed Virgin could not be sanctified before being united with the soul⁴⁴. Therefore, Mary's sanctification took place before Her birth. However, it did not cause the disappearance of *fomes peccati*⁴⁵.

³⁸ As Marielle Lamy notes, Hannibald's work is nothing more than a shortened version of a commentary on the Sentences of Thomas Aquinas. See: LAMY, M., *L'Immaculée Conception*, 245, note 23.

³⁹ HANNIBALDUS DE HANNIBALDIS, *In III Sententiarum*, d. III, quaestio unica, art. 2 corp., in SANCTI THOMAE AQUINATIS, *Opera omnia*, vol. XXII, Parmae: Ex typographeo Petri Fiacadori, 1868, 239a.

⁴⁰ FRANCO, F., «Pietro di Tarantasia», in *Lexicon*, 1008-1009.

⁴¹ INNOCENTIUS QUINTUS, *In III Sentent. dist. III, quaest. I, art. 2*, in INNOCENTIUS QUINTUS, *In IV Libros Sententiarum Commentaria*, ed. T. TURCO y G. B. MARINIS, Tolosae: apud Arnaldum Colomerium, 1652, fol. 19ab.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ BOMBOLOGNUS DE BOLONIA, *De sanctificatione B.V. Mariae*, in PIANA, C., «Questione inedita "De sanctificatione B.V. Mariae" di Bombologno da Bologna OP», *Studi Francescani* 13 (1941) 185-196.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 186.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 193.

Bombolognus emphasized the sinlessness of Christ, who, conceived by the Holy Spirit, was free from original and actual sin. If the result of the Redemption accomplished by Christ was the manifold glory of the saints, then depriving the Blessed Virgin of the fruits of the Redemption would automatically mean excluding Her from God's glory⁴⁶.

It is noteworthy that Bombolognus, although in his reflection he quotes solutions known to theologians of that time, refers to the authority of St. Augustine and St. Bernard of Clairvaux, but does not cite the opinion of Thomas Aquinas. In his reflection, he focused on the universality of the Redemption accomplished by Christ.

To sum up, it should be noted that theological works of selected Dominicans of the 13th century contain the unanimous position of the Dominicans of the 13th century on the issue of the Immaculate Conception. The reflection on the sanctification of Mary is made in the context of the universality of the effects of original sin affecting human nature, as well as the universality of the work of Redemption accomplished by Christ. The Blessed Virgin, conceived in the state of original sin, was able to share in the fruits of Redemption: she was purified and sanctified in Her mother's womb. Her conception in the state of original sin is evidenced by the source of sin (*fomes peccati*), which Mary, despite Her first sanctification, was not deprived of. The presented position of Dominican theologians is characterized by uniformity. However, in the analyzed writings we will not find any traces of the influence of Aquinas' reflections on the positions of individual Dominican theologians.

b) *The position of the Dominicans in the 14th century*

Herveus Natalis (+ 1323)

The author of the *Commentary on the Sentences*, written in Paris at the beginning of the 14th century, based his theological reflection on the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas⁴⁷. Herveus was not only against the Immaculate Conception, but also polemicized with the position of supporters of the Marian privilege. In view of their argument about the prevenient grace of Christ pre-

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 189-190.

⁴⁷ LONGO, C., «Erveo di Nedellec», in *Lexicon*, 449-450.

serving Mary from original sin⁴⁸, Herveus Natalis opposed the claim that this opinion was contrary to Holy Scripture. Citing the authority of St. Paul, he reminded us of the universality of the effects of original sin. In this approach, the above-mentioned thesis of the immaculists would also contradict the Fathers of the Church⁴⁹. If the Blessed Virgin had been free from sin, She should not have been subject to death. However, since She died, She was subject to the law of death⁵⁰.

Another argument cited by the Dominican refers to the universality of Redemption. As Herveus noted, freedom from original sin would place Mary outside the order of salvation⁵¹.

The French Dominican also considered the possibility of Mary's conception in original sin and Her immediate sanctification. However, he rejected this possibility as it would imply that both guilt and grace were present in Her soul at the same moment⁵².

Finally, he considered the last possibility, according to which the Blessed Virgin was in a state of sin for some time and then, before leaving Her mother's womb, grace was granted to Her in a greater degree than to other saints. This solution was approved by a Dominican theologian. As a result of Mary's sanctification, the source of sin was neutralized in Her, and during the second sanctification, it was eliminated so that She could not sin in the future⁵³. The proposed solution is coherent with the position of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Durandus de Sancto Porciano (+ 1334)

It should be emphasized that Durandus often presented bold, even eccentric and controversial views. Some of them were condemned at the general chapter in Metz⁵⁴. He claimed, among other things, that the Blessed Virgin was conceived without original sin. In the commentary on the Sentences,

⁴⁸ HERVEUS NATALIS, *Liber III, d. 3, q. 1*, in HERVEUS NATALIS, *In quattuor Sententiarum*, Venetiis: per Iacobum de Pentio, 1505, 4vb.

⁴⁹ HERVEUS NATALIS, *Liber III, d. 3, q. 1, 4ra*. See: HORST, U., *Dogma und Theologie. Dominikanertheologen in den Kontroversen um die Immaculata Conceptio*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2009, 19.

⁵⁰ HERVEUS NATALIS, *Liber III, d. 3, q. 1*, fol. 4vb.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4ra.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4rb-5vb.

⁵⁴ SALVATI, G. M., «Durando di San Porciano», in *Lexicon*, 414-415.

he noted that since Christ's birth was not accompanied by the pain of childbirth (a consequence of original sin), it seems that His Mother was free from original sin⁵⁵. The second argument that allowed the Dominican to proclaim Mary's freedom from original sin were the circumstances of Her Assumption. Since Mary's body was preserved from destruction after Her death (and the decomposition of the body after death is a consequence of original sin), it seems that She was free from original sin⁵⁶.

As Durandus notes, God's grace is granted to exalt nature or to erase guilt and uplift it. In the first case, this applies to angels created without sin⁵⁷. However, in the second one, to beings fallen because of sin⁵⁸. According to the Dominican, the Blessed Virgin was not conceived in original sin, since the union of soul and body and the bestowal of sanctifying grace took place at one and the same moment⁵⁹.

Durandus pointed out that the body, being a carrier of some morbid contamination, after contact with the soul, caused man to be infected with original sin. However, God could preserve man's body from morbid contamination or purify it before uniting with the soul. To make his opinion credible, he referred to the argument of the Most Perfect Mediator, to who the Blessed Virgin would not have been the most perfect Mediator if She had been tainted by even the slightest sin⁶⁰.

The Dominican also considered the issue of Mary's participation in the mystery of Christ's Redemption (*redemptio*). Responding to the opponents of the Immaculate Conception, for whom the lack of original sin made it impossible to participate in the fruits of Christ's Redemption, Durandus noted that if Mary, in order to become the mother of the Saviour, restrained by God's power, were not to fall into the slavery of original sin, it should be said that She demanded Blessings of Redemption⁶¹. This argument echoes the thought of Duns Scotus.

Be that as it may, it must be said that Durandus departed from the classical Aristotelian concept since he believed that at the same moment of con-

⁵⁵ DURANDUS DE SANCTO PORCIANO, *Liber III, d. 3, q. 1*, in DURANDUS DE SANCTO PORCIANO, *Super IV Sententiarum*, Venetiis: ex typographia Guerraea, 1571, fol. 217v.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 217r.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

ception the union of soul and body took place and divine grace was granted⁶². Until then, this pattern of conception was reserved only for Christ. With his position, Durandus broke away from the uniform and official stand of the Order on the Immaculate Conception, thus showing that not all Dominicans supported this position. It should be emphasized that Durandus did not quote Duns Scotus. Instead, he relied on the texts of Augustine, Anselm and Richard of St. Victor. An additional argument is the growing popularity of the liturgical feast of the Immaculate Conception in many churches⁶³.

In summary, it should be said that the position taken by the Dominicans of the 14th century on the Immaculate Conception is not homogenous. In addition to the traditional interpretation represented by Herveus Natalis, it is important to note the suggestion presented by Durandus de Sancto Porciano. The proposed interpretation breaks with the decrees of the general chapters of the Dominicans, which ordered the adoption of the St. Thomas' doctrine as binding for the entire Order. Furthermore, it is the first testimony of Dominican theological reflection, which is part of the current of supporters of the Immaculate Conception. It should be noted that Durandus' position coincides with the teachings of Duns Scotus. These findings are so revealing that no one has noticed so far that the position of Dominican theologians in the 14th century was not uniform regarding the issue of the Immaculate Conception. Therefore, pointing to the writings of Durandus de Sancto Porciano, it cannot be maintained that all Dominicans were against the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

c) *The position of the Dominicans in the 15th century*

Johannes Dominici (+ 1419)

The author of the treatise *De Conceptione B. Virginis*, rejected the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, considering it a heresy⁶⁴. The Italian Dominican, faithful to the tradition of the Order, emphasized the universal dimension of original sin and, therefore, the universal

⁶² DURANDUS DE SANCTO PORCIANO, *Liber III, d. 3, q. 1*, fol. 217v.

⁶³ HORST, U., *Dogma und Theologie*, 20.

⁶⁴ JOHANNES DOMINICI, *De Conceptione B. Virginis*, in DA PRATI, P., *Linguaggio e pensiero di Giovanni Dominici nel 'De Conceptione B. Virginis' (Trattato inedito 1390)*, Napoli: Istituto Editoriale del Mezzogiorno, 1965, 30.

nature of redemption. Based on the writings of St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, he recalled that the privilege of being conceived in holiness was reserved only for the One who Himself sanctified all by accomplishing the forgiveness of sins⁶⁵. In the treatise, apart from references to the writings of St. Bede the Venerable, St. John of Damascus, St. Anselm or Hugh of St. Victor, the strong influence of St. Thomas Aquinas' position is noteworthy. John Dominici included in his work Aquinas' teaching on the conception of the Blessed Virgin. He stated, among other things, that 'the sanctification of the Blessed Virgin Mary' could not have taken place before the infusion of the soul, since then She would not have been capable of receiving grace. Nor did the union of the body and soul take place at the very moment so that, thanks to the grace poured into the soul, She was preserved from original sin.

Christ is unique among the human race as there is no need for Him to be redeemed because He is our Head, but all others are redeemed through His mediation. This would be impossible if there were any soul that was not tainted by the taint of original sin. This privilege, however, has not been granted to anyone except Christ' (cfr. III Sent. d. 3, q. 1, a. 1, sol. 2)⁶⁶. Referring to the *Summa Theologiae* (III, q. 27, a. 2 ad 2 sol.), John Dominici noted that 'if the soul of the Blessed Virgin were preserved from the taint of original sin, this would diminish the dignity of Christ Himself, since He could not be recognized as the Saviour of all men'⁶⁷. It follows that the Dominican defended the universal dimension of original sin and, consequently, the universality of Christ's redemption. The treatise also contains references to the writings of other Dominican theologians: Peter of Tarantasia, Albert the Great, Durandus and Hervaeus Natalis. The reflection of Peter of Tarantasia, included in the commentary on the Sentences, was presented with particular insight. This Dominican analyzed four possibilities for the sanctification of the Blessed Virgin: a) before conception and before birth, b) after conception and after birth, c) at the moment of birth or at the moment of conception, and d) at the moment of conception, but not at the moment of birth⁶⁸.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

While considering the possibility of implementing the first one, he came to reject it, as grace could not be granted before the existence of nature. After all, grace is based on nature. The second solution is characterized by the sanctification of all people, while the third option is reserved only for Christ. Peter of Tarantasia drew attention to the last version of sanctification, appropriate to the Blessed Virgin, who was sanctified in her mother's womb on the same day, and even at the same hour after conception, but not at the same moment⁶⁹.

As can be seen, the position of Peter of Tarantasia, quoted by John Dominici, coincides with the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas. The author of the treatise also cited the thought of St. Albert the Great and Hervaeus Natalis. The first of them stated that the claim about the Blessed Virgin not having been conceived in original sin was condemned by the Parisian masters as an error⁷⁰. The second one emphasized the universality of the redemptive passion of Christ. In this context, Mary's freedom from the taint of original sin would imply the lack of necessity to participate in the fruits of Christ's redemption⁷¹. Moreover, Mary's conception free from original sin would mean that she would be equal in holiness to Christ Himself⁷².

Considering the marital act of Joachim and Anna (*conceptio activa*), typical of the *via generationis* of the human race, which was marked by concupiscence, as Jan Dominici notes, the nature of this act assumed the conception of Mary in the state of original sin⁷³.

To further substantiate the Dominican position, John Dominici mentioned some Franciscan theologians whose opinions coincided with the Dominicans' view on the conception of the Blessed Virgin (St. Bonaventure, Richard of Media Villa, Henry of Gand, John of Poliano)⁷⁴.

The treatise also cites the arguments of the proponents of the Immaculate Conception, which are then subjected to criticism. John Dominici questioned the main thesis of the immaculists, which is preservative redemption⁷⁵. It proclaimed that the Blessed Virgin was redeemed from original sin not so much because She incurred it, but because She did not commit it. Therefore, redemp-

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 53.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 45-47.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

tion in relation to Mary would be expressed in Her preservation from sin⁷⁶. He goes on to conclude that keeping oneself from sin nullifies redemption.

Based on the traditional concept of redemption, the Dominican emphasized that Christ's passion undertaken for our salvation appears as a cause in the face of an effect. Therefore, to claim that the Blessed Virgin was redeemed by virtue of Christ's previously received merit would mean that the effect preceded the cause by over forty years (if we assume that the Mother of Jesus was approximately 47 years old at the time of His passion)⁷⁷. The concept of redemption, according to John Dominici, presupposes the presence of sin, not its absence.

The Dominican also rejected another important claim of the immaculists that Mary, thanks to the absolute power of God (*potentia absoluta*), was preserved from the common law from which no one was excluded. Dominici rejected this view, noting that it had no basis in Holy Scripture⁷⁸.

John Dominici did not ignore the issue of the liturgical celebration of the Immaculate Conception. Recalling the position of the Angelic Doctor, he stated that among the Marian feasts included in the liturgical calendar of the universal Church, the feast of Her conception is not listed, although in many churches it is celebrated due to the piety of the faithful⁷⁹.

In conclusion, it should be said that John Dominici's treatise is a testimony to an in-depth reflection on the conception of the Blessed Virgin. As a Dominican, he represents a traditional negative stance towards the Immaculate Conception. Invoking the authority of St. Thomas Aquinas, he drew attention to his unique role not only in the Order, but also in the Church. The treatise is of an apologetic nature, which is why John Dominici not only defended his position, but also criticized the theses of the supporters of the Marian privilege (preservative redemption, *potentia absoluta*).

Johannes de Turrecremata (+ 1468)

The author of the treatise *De veritate Conceptionis Beatissimae Virginis*, written in 1437, not only presented the Dominican position, but also defended it, criticizing the opinions of the proponents of the Immaculate Concep-

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

tion of Mary. Although this work was brought to the Council of Basel⁸⁰, Torquemada initially spoke publicly, opposing the introduction of the feast of the Immaculate Conception throughout the Church⁸¹. Upon learning that Pope Eugene IV did not approve of the conciliar assembly, he left Basel and went with the papal legates to Ferrara, not bothering to defend his opinion presented in the aforementioned treaty⁸².

Although this work did not play a major role in the debate on the Immaculate Conception, it is worthwhile to reflect on the Spanish Dominican, mirroring the critical stance of Dominicans towards the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

The author of the treatise, explaining the position of opponents of the Marian privilege, emphasized the universal nature of original sin. Relying on the authority of Holy Scripture he reminded that all people who were descendants of Adam were conceived in original sin⁸³. Therefore, every human being born into the world is deprived of the state of original justice. This truth was documented by numerous examples from the Bible⁸⁴ and the writings of the Church Fathers⁸⁵.

Therefore, since all the descendants of Adam were conceived in original sin, there is no need to make an exception for the Blessed Virgin, since in this way we separate Her from universal law⁸⁶. Freedom from original sin is the exclusive attribute of Christ⁸⁷. If Mary possessed this privilege, the Holy Spirit would not be silent in Holy Scripture or in the Church⁸⁸. Since the Blessed Virgin came from offspring marked by sin, She was conceived in original sin. Therefore, Her body was marked by the taint of sin, while Christ's body was immaculate as it was not conceived according to the *lex concupiscentiae*⁸⁹. The Dominican cardinal noted that this opinion was confirmed by theologi-

⁸⁰ KAEPEL, Th., *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, vol. III, Romae: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1980, 24.

⁸¹ GAY-CANTON, R., *Entre dévotion et théologie*, 107.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 108.

⁸³ JOHANNES DE TURRECREMATA, *Tractatus 'De veritate Conceptionis Beatissimae Virginis'*, Bruxelles: Culture et Civilisation, 1966, fol. 25.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 113-118.

⁸⁵ Torquemada quotes the works of Hilary, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, Leo the Great and medieval writers: Bede, Anselm, Gregory, Bernard of Clairvaux. *Ibid.*, 119-139.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 244.

cal authorities: St. Anselm, Hugo of St. Victor, St. Bernard of Clairvaux or St. Thomas Aquinas⁹⁰.

Juan de Torquemada attached great importance to the teachings of Aquinas, thus emphasizing his unquestionable authority⁹¹. In his treatise, he analyzed all texts in which the Angelic Doctor addressed the circumstances of the conception of the Virgin Mary. Based on Aquinas' opinion, he also explained the issue of the liturgical celebration of the feast of *Conceptio Mariae*. He noted that many particular churches celebrated the feast of the sanctification (conception) of the Blessed Virgin (e.g. in Catalonia and Germany)⁹².

At the same time, Torquemada did not limit himself to presenting the position of St. Thomas Aquinas. He added to his opinion an impressive list of Dominican and Franciscan theologians claiming that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin and then sanctified⁹³. Their claims are confirmed by the cited rulings of the Church councils and the teachings of the popes⁹⁴.

Criticizing the position of proponents of the Marian privilege, the Dominican cardinal emphasized that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was based neither on Holy Scripture nor on universally recognized authorities. Moreover, it is contrary to the opinion of the Church Fathers⁹⁵. He noted that the doctrine of the Blessed Virgin's conception in original sin was universal, therefore it was not safe to abandon the established teaching. He justified his conclusion with theological arguments. Placing the person of Christ at the center of his reflection, he emphasized the uniqueness of His virginal conception, His beauty, His special anointing with the Holy Spirit, freedom from sin and immaculateness. The emphasis placed on the extraordinary circumstances of Christ's conception (free from sin, pure, holy) allo-

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 273-290.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 297.

⁹² JOHANNES DE TURRECREMATA, *Tractatus*, 298.

⁹³ There were mentioned, among others: Hugo de Sancto Caro, Albert the Great, Peter of Tarrantasia, Ulrich of Strasbourg, James of Voragine, Durandus, Henricus Natalis, Peter of Palude, James of Lausanne, John of Naples. Thomasinus, Hugo of Strasbourg, Nicholas Trivet, Robert Holkot, Peter of Palma, Martin the Pole, Nicholas of Gorran, Vincent of Beauvais, James of Benevento, John of Lettemberg, John Sernigacci, and Johannes de Turrecremata, *Tractatus*, foll. 332-338. Franciscan theologians holding a similar opinion included: Alexander of Halles, Bonaventure, Richard of Media Villa, Nicholas of Lyra, Bartholomew of Pisa, Conrad of Saxony and several other masters from the Order of Friars Minor. JOHANNES DE TURRECREMATA, *Tractatus*, 339-346.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 363.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 364.

wed attention to be drawn to the imperfect conception of Mary (in original sin)⁹⁶.

Torquemada analyzed the meaning of Christ's names in the light of His universal salvific activity. Characterizing the meaning of the first term (*Redemptor*), the Dominican linked the work of redemption accomplished by Christ with human sin⁹⁷. In conclusion, he noted that it is difficult to accept that someone was redeemed by the blood of Christ who had never been subjected to sin. Redemption means buying back something that once belonged to someone. Therefore, if someone previously possessed grace and lost it, he regained it as a result of redemption. As can be seen, for the Spanish Dominican, the concept of redemption assumed previous slavery to sin⁹⁸.

Torquemada once again returned to the concept of redemption as understood by Franciscan theologians. Preservation from sin (*praeservatio*) was called redemption by them in reference to one who had never been in bondage, either temporal or spiritual, but would have fallen into it if redemption and liberation had not preceded this person⁹⁹. According to Torquemada, redemption does not mean preservation (*praeservatio*), but liberation from the slavery of sin, quoting the Apostle's words, 'Christus dilexit Ecclesiam et tradidit semetipsum pro ea, ut illam sanctificaret mundans eam lavacro aquae, in verbo vitae (Eph 5:1)'¹⁰⁰.

The author of the treatise analyzed another Christological title – Mediator, which emphasizes that Christ became an intermediary with God towards every human being who had committed sin. In view of this, Christ was the mediator with God also towards the Blessed Virgin. Therefore, it must be concluded that She must have been subjected to some kind of sin: if not actual sin (*actualis*), then original sin. 'There is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ', whose task it is to 'unite two separated ends or bring them to reconciliation'¹⁰¹.

In conclusion, he invoked the authority of St. Thomas Aquinas, who in the *Summa Theologiae* (STh I-IIae, q. 81, art. 1) stated that it was part of the Catholic faith that all people (except Christ), who descended from Adam, in-

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 383.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 431.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 441.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 470.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 475.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 491.

curred original sin. Therefore, it is ‘erroneous to say that anyone, apart from Christ, was conceived without original sin’ (IV Sent, dist. 43, art. 4)¹⁰².

Antoninus Florentinus (+ 1495)

Although *Summa theologia* – the most famous work of St. Antoninus – was devoted to moral issues, it also addresses the issue of the sanctification of the Blessed Virgin¹⁰³. As he noted, although the Church did not officially define whether the Blessed Virgin Mary was conceived in original sin or not, Her conception should be considered similar to that of other people¹⁰⁴. Justifying his position, Antoninus referred to the universality of original sin, emphasizing that ‘all have sinned and are deprived of God’s grace’ (Rm 3:23). He also recalled the statement of St. Thomas Aquinas that Christ, the only Mediator and Redeemer of humanity, was free from any sin¹⁰⁵. Accepting Mary’s preservation from sin would be an insult to the dignity of Christ, the Saviour of all people (STh III, q. 27)¹⁰⁶.

The Archbishop of Florence, in addition to the opinion of the Angelic Doctor, cited the statements of other Dominican theologians: Peter of Taranasia, Herveus Natalis, Durandus de Sancto Porciano, and John of Naples, which contained similar arguments¹⁰⁷. Antoninus, after analyzing all probable possibilities of conception and sanctification, came to the conclusion that Mary’s sanctification took place after the union of body and soul, on the same day, or perhaps even at the same hour¹⁰⁸.

Summa theologia also discusses the position of theologians from the Order of St. Francis: both opponents and supporters of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. It appears that the position of St. Bonaventure and selected Franciscan theologians is consistent with the view of the Dominicans¹⁰⁹. However, the stance of the proponents of the Immaculate Conception was identified with the view of Duns Scotus. Antoninus, arguing with the Franciscan’s arguments, emphasized the universal dimension of Adam’s sin.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 494.

¹⁰³ MANZONE, G., «Antonino da Firenze», in *Lexicon*, 91-92.

¹⁰⁴ ANTONINUS FLORENTINUS, *Summa theologia*, vol. 1, tit. VIII, cap. II, Graz: Akademische Druck U. Verlagsanstalt, 1959, col. 547.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 549.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 550.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 550.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

Commenting on the question of the feast of the Conception of Mary, Antoninus recalled Aquinas' remark that the mentioned liturgical celebration had not been officially approved by the Roman Church. He also recalled the opinion of St. Bernard of Clairvaux that the Church, while tolerating the liturgical celebrations of local churches, did not know the moment of Mary's sanctification, therefore the feast of *Conceptio Mariae* would refer to the moment of sanctification at which She is believed to have been conceived¹¹⁰.

Furthermore, Antoninus rejected the arguments from private revelations, which Franciscans often referred to, thus trying to justify the truth about the Immaculate Conception. The Archbishop of Florence noted that the so-called Bernard's revelations should be considered fantastic visions that could not be given credence. Moreover, even if some saints experienced revelations confirming the Immaculate Conception (such as St. Bridget of Sweden), there were also revelations of other saints that included content contrary to this privilege (such as St. Catherine of Siena). Therefore, they cannot be treated as an authentic source of theological knowledge¹¹¹.

d) *The position of the Dominicans in the 16th century*

Vincentius Bandellus de Castronovo (+ 1506)

Vincent Bandellus, elected general of the Dominican Order (1501-1506) at the end of his life, wrote *Tractatus de singulari puritate et prearogativa conceptionis salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi*¹¹².

The author, describing the state of man's original righteousness¹¹³ and the effects of the first parents' sin¹¹⁴, noted that Adam could not pass on to his offspring what he was deprived of¹¹⁵. Since subsequent generations were deprived of the gift of original righteousness, this lack also affected the Blessed Virgin¹¹⁶. Only Christ, conceived by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, was

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 553.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 554.

¹¹² VINCENTIUS DE BANDELIS DE CASTRO NOVO O.P., *Tractatus de singulari puritate et prearogativa conceptionis salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi*, Bononiae: per Ugonem de Rugeriis de Regio, 1481.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, cap. 3-4, 6r-7r.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, cap. 5, 7r-7v.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, cap. 6, 8r.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, cap. 6, 8v.

free from original sin¹¹⁷. However, all other people were born deprived of the state of original righteousness. The Dominican further emphasized this truth, citing the statements of the Church Fathers and medieval theologians, as well as the teachings of popes and authorities in the field of canon law¹¹⁸. Based on this fundamental truth, Bandelli stressed the conception of the Blessed Virgin in the state of original sin¹¹⁹.

In the following chapters of the work, he presented the Dominicans' approach to the problem of the conception of the Blessed Virgin. He began his review of the opinions of theologians from the Order of Preachers with St. Thomas Aquinas, whose doctrine met with the approval of Popes Urban and Innocent and the masters of the University of Paris. In this way, he emphasized the authority that the Angelic Doctor enjoyed both in the Order and in the Church¹²⁰.

Bandelli, in addition to the opinion of St. Thomas presented the views of other Dominican theologians: Antoninus of Florence, Albert the Great, Hugh de Sancto Caro, Peter of Tarantasia, John Dominici, Peter of Palude, Hannibaldus of Hannibaldis, Durand de Sancto Porciano, William Peraldus, Hervéus Natalis and Bombolognus of Bologna. The opinion of the latter summarizes the Dominican attitude to the issue of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, "The Blessed Virgin was not sanctified before the union of body and soul, nor at the moment of this union (*animatio*), but after this union. If She had not incurred original sin, She would have been deprived of Christ's universal sanctification and redemption"¹²¹.

He also added Dominican preachers to the list of eminent theologians: James of Voragine, James of Lausanne, and Marcin Polak¹²². In total, Bandelli presented the testimonies of 72 Dominicans unanimously stating that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin¹²³.

This compilation is accompanied by the list of over thirty Franciscan authors who maintained that the Blessed Virgin Mary was conceived in original

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, cap. 7, 9r.

¹¹⁸ The Dominican refers to the writings of: Innocent I, Innocent II, Innocent III, Honorius III, Clement V, Innocent V, Boniface III, Eugene IV. *Ibid.*, cap. 18, foll. 25r-26v. Moreover, he cites authorities in the field of canon law. *Ibid.*, cap. 19, foll. 27v-28r.

¹¹⁹ Bandelli quotes fragments from the patristic writings and the authorities of medieval theologians, claiming that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, cap. 23, 37v-37r.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, cap. 23, 40v.

¹²² *Ibid.*, cap. 23, 38v-39v.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, cap. 24, 42r.

sin and later sanctified. Among the theologians listed, the following are worth mentioning: St. Anthony of Padua, Saint Bonaventure, Alexander of Halles, Richard of Mediavilla, William of Ockham¹²⁴ and Conrad of Saxony, who noted that ‘Christus enim non fuit in peccato conceptus nec natus. Beata autem Virgo fuit quidem in peccato originale concepta, sed sine peccato nata’¹²⁵.

Finally, the opinion of Duns Scotus was presented¹²⁶, which was juxtaposed with the views of Franciscan theologians proclaiming Mary’s conception in original sin: Francis of Asti, Garaldo of Odonis, John Gallicus, Landulphus and Philip of Monte Callerio.

It should be noted that Bandelli analyzed the doctrine of Duns Scotus from the perspective of the Dominicans, without a thorough examination of the specific approach of the Franciscan author. Quoting from Holy Scripture, the writings of the Church Fathers, medieval theologians, papal teachings and the traditional understanding of the concept of redemption allowed the general of the Order to stand firm in his position. Referring to the teachings of St. Thomas on Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and people, he stated that the claim about the Blessed Virgin not having been redeemed by Christ’s passion was contrary to the Catholic faith and was a Pelagian heresy¹²⁷.

Moreover, Bandelli, citing the authority of Aquinas, rejected the concept of ‘redemptio preservativa’. In the light of Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross, the concept of preservative redemption appears idle and foolish¹²⁸. For he who is preserved from all ugliness cannot say of himself that he has been washed. Conversely, he who has been preserved from all disease cannot say that he has been healed. A man saved from slavery cannot say that he has been redeemed¹²⁹. Hence Bandelli draws the following conclusion, ‘Christus una oblatione consummavit sanctificatos in sempiternum: ita etiam una redemptione sublevavit omnes sanctificatos a peccato cum ergo beata virgo sit redempta per passionem Christi redemptione proprie dicta sequitur quod aliquando fuerit sub peccato captiva’¹³⁰.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, cap. 24, 42v-43r.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, cap. 24, 45r.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, cap. 24, 45v.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, cap. 27, 50r.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, cap. 27, 58r.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, cap. 27, 58r.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, cap. 27, 59v.

The subsequent chapters of the treatise present further arguments based on St. Thomas' doctrine, which justify the negative attitude of the Dominicans towards the Immaculate Conception of Mary¹³¹. They allowed the author to formulate the following conclusion: *the opinion that the Blessed Virgin did not commit original sin was contrary to the authority of the saints and was therefore foolish and devoid of piety (impia et non pia)*¹³².

It should be noted that St. Thomas Aquinas' teaching constitutes for Bandelli the basis of his theological reflection. It is a clear and expressive testimony to the great authority that the Angelic Doctor's teachings enjoyed in the Order of Preachers at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries. The remaining Dominican theologians, although mentioned and occasionally quoted, in fact became a kind of background for Aquinas' position. Simultaneously, Bandelli's treatise exemplifies the narrowing of the horizons of Dominican theology to the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas. Moreover, it is a testimony to the gradual departure from the actual contribution to the discussion on the Immaculate Conception of Mary by Dominicans living in the 13th-15th centuries, in favour of Aquinas.

The second part of the treatise has an apologetic and polemical character, as the Dominican general deals with the arguments of the supporters of the Immaculate Conception of Mary¹³³. He begins his discourse by explaining the meaning of the concept of *immunis a peccato originali*. Citing the opinion of Aquinas (I Sent. d. 44, art. 3), he stated that at the moment of conception, each descendant of Adam is marked by the stain of guilt (*macula culpe*) and the source of sin (*fomes peccati*). The conception of the Blessed Virgin was not different from the rest of humanity; after the union of body and soul, She was quickly purified from the taint of guilt, while the source of sin (*fomes peccati*) was immobilized in Her¹³⁴. After Her sanctification, She was prepared to become the Mother of God¹³⁵.

Bandelli demonstrated inaccuracies in the use of texts taken from the works of St. Augustine¹³⁶ and St. Anselm¹³⁷ showing that their authentic mea-

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, cap. 28-35, 59v-71r.

¹³² *Ibid.*, cap. 35, 71r.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, II pars, 76r.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, II pars, 76v.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 77v.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 78v.

ning refers to the conception of Jesus and not to the conception of Mary. However, the verse ‘Tota pulchra es amica mea et macula non est in te’ (Song 4)¹³⁸, which is an important argument for proponents of the privilege, should be considered in a spiritual rather than the expressive sense¹³⁹.

The Dominican rejected another argument of the immaculists, which pointed to the fullness of Mary’s grace, and therefore the absence of any defect, which consequently implied the Immaculate Conception. According to Bandelli, the fullness of Mary’s grace should be referred not to the moment of Her conception, but to the conception of the Son of God, since at that very moment She was greeted with the words of the angel Gabriel¹⁴⁰.

The Dominican decried the erroneous reasoning of the immaculists maintaining that if the Blessed Virgin was preserved from venial sins (which were a lesser evil), then She was certainly preserved from original sin, which was a much greater evil. If Mary was preserved from the sorrows of childbirth (which was a lesser evil), Bandelli replies, why was She not preserved from death, which was a greater evil?¹⁴¹.

The Dominican general also criticized another argument of the supporters, based on the so-called *potentia absoluta Dei*. They argued that God could have preserved the Blessed Virgin and the entire human race from sin, as this would not have been contrary to His omnipotence. The Dominican assumed that God had predetermined everything. Christ should die to redeem all people destined for eternal life. It was therefore impossible for the Blessed Virgin to be preserved from original sin, since this would have opposed the essence of redemption (*praeservatio tollit redemptionem*). It is true, Bandelli continues, that God in His omnipotence could do much that He had not planned beforehand, however not in the way that He sometimes did something He had not previously determined. Therefore, it was not possible for Mary to be preserved from original sin unless God had predetermined it before¹⁴².

Moreover, immaculists claimed that since the Blessed Virgin was exalted above the choirs of angels, She was without original sin. Rejecting this opinion, Bandelli noted that in the opinion of some Friars Minor, St. Francis was

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 79r.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 79v.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 79v.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 80v.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 93v.

elevated above the choirs of angels, even though he was conceived in original sin and committed many grave sins before his conversion¹⁴³.

Bandelli, defending the traditional concept of redemption, emphasized the perfect act of Christ – the perfect Mediator and Redeemer, through Whom the work of redemption was accomplished. From this perspective, Mary's preservation from all sin would exclude Christ's redemption and mediation. In the adopted perspective, the concept of redemption assumes prior enslavement. Therefore, if we accept the line of the proponents of the Marian privilege, and if Christ was the most perfect Mediator, implementing the most perfect act of redemption in relation to Mary, then He would consequently have to save all people from all sin, thus legitimizing the most perfect act of redemption¹⁴⁴.

The author of the treatise drew attention to the liturgical celebration of the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin¹⁴⁵. As proponents of the privilege argued, since the Pope honoured the celebration of the above-mentioned feast with a special indulgence, this act would confirm the immaculateness of this conception. The Dominican, opposing such reasoning, distinguished a dual dimension of the Blessed Virgin's conception. Conception in the first sense would refer to the union of body and soul – it involved the enlistment of original sin. However, in the second meaning, conception had a spiritual character and referred to the moment when, after the union of body and soul, God granted His grace thanks to which the Blessed Virgin – purified from original sin – was holy and immaculate¹⁴⁶. Therefore, the Church celebrates the feast of *Conceptio Mariae* only in a spiritual sense as the granting of God's grace to Mary, conceived in Her mother's womb¹⁴⁷.

Expanding on his reflection on the celebrated feast, the Dominican referred to the office of *De Conceptione Beatae Mariae* by the Franciscan Leonardo de Nogarolis, which was approved by Sixtus IV. Bandelli, analyzing the subject of the liturgical celebration, recalled two dimensions of conception: corporeal and spiritual. The first concerns the union of the male semen with the matter provided by the woman. Its effect is an embryo which is not yet holy as the human soul – the subject of holiness – has not yet been imparted. At the moment of the union of body and soul, original sin occurred. Mary's spiritual

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 97v.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 98v-99r.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 81r.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, fol. 81r.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

conception took place after the union of body and soul, when God's grace was granted to Her. As a result, it can be said that the conception was holy and immaculate.

The Dominican criticized the form of the liturgical office of the feast, noting many misinterpretations that were contrary to the authority of Holy Scripture and the authority of the Doctors of the Church¹⁴⁸. The criticism included, among others, the oratio from the Mass form¹⁴⁹, as well as the selection of breviary readings taken both from Holy Scripture (Prov 8)¹⁵⁰, and from the works of the Fathers of the Church and medieval theologians: St. Augustine, St. Idelphonsus of Toledo, St. Anselm, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, which, as Bandelli showed, were false, that is, were never written by the above-mentioned writers¹⁵¹.

Thomas de Vio Cajetanus (+ 1534)

Thomas de Vio Cajetanus is the author of the small treatise *De Conceptione Beatae Mariae Virginis*, written in 1515¹⁵². The starting point for the Dominican's deliberations was the truth expressed in Holy Scripture that Christ died for everyone. Hence the conclusion: since Christ died for all, then all sinned. The Dominican theologian, arguing with the opinion proclaimed by immaculists about Mary's preservation from original sin, noted that this privilege could be understood in two ways: as a complete exclusion of Mary from all the consequences of original sin, or as granting Her personal grace thanks to which She was preserved from the taint of original sin¹⁵³. The Dominican rejected the first understanding of this privilege, as it was contrary to the Catholic faith and the authority of Holy Scripture. He stated that Mary was redeemed by the death of Christ and consequently reconciled with God¹⁵⁴. Therefore, the position proclaiming Her complete preservation from original sin and its consequences should be condemned.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, fol. 86r.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, fol. 87r.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, fol. 87v.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 88r-90v.

¹⁵² THOMAS DE VIO CAJETANUS, *Tractatus primus de Conceptione Beatae Mariae Virginis ad Leonem decimum pontificem maximum*, in THOMAS DE VIO CAJETANUS, *Opuscula omnia*, tomus II, Lugduni: apud haeredes Iacobi Iuntae, 1562, foll. 137-142.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, fol. 138.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

The Dominican accepted the second interpretation of the Marian privilege, according to which Mary was preserved from the taint of original sin, but not from the contamination of the body (*infectio carnis*), nor from the obligation to stain Her own person (*nec a debito in propria persona illius maculae*), nor from the source of sin (*fomes peccati*), nor from penalties. Such an interpretation, he noted, did not contradict Holy Scripture or the teaching of the Church¹⁵⁵.

It should be noted that the expressed opinion of Thomas de Vio is the first testimony to the gradual evolution of the Dominican stance towards the Immaculate Conception. For the first time, the Dominican accepted the concept of preservative redemption (*redemptio praeservativa*) in relation to the Virgin Mary, while emphasizing that like other sinners She was also included in the saving sacrifice of Christ made on the cross¹⁵⁶.

Cajetan analyzed the position of theologians proclaiming the conception of the Blessed Virgin in original sin, and Her subsequent purification and sanctification. He noted that this opinion appears in the works of authorities in the field of theology and canon law: Augustine, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Maximinus, Remigius, Bede the Venerable, Anselm, Bernard of Clairvaux, Anthony of Padua, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas¹⁵⁷, and also Juan de Torquemada and Vincent Bandellus¹⁵⁸. He described the position of the maculists as coherent, rational, consonant with faith and compatible with piety¹⁵⁹.

Cajetan also critically assessed the position of the immaculists, which, as they claimed, was based on the opinion of theologians, on the decrees of synods, on the piety of the Church and on private revelations¹⁶⁰. Referring to the use of the content of private revelations in theological reflection, he subjected to criticism the revelations received by St. Bridget of Sweden. They contained information about the Immaculate Conception of Mary and were contrasted with the private revelations of St. Catherine of Siena concerning Mary's conception in original sin¹⁶¹.

Moreover, he subjected Mary's preservation from original sin at the moment of conception to criticism, juxtaposing the truth that Christ's atoning

¹⁵⁵ HORST, U., *Die Diskussion*, 22.

¹⁵⁶ THOMAS DE VIO CAJETANUS, *Tractatus*, 139.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 139-140.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

death on the cross implied Mary's submission to the power of death for the sake of sin. To see Her as an exception would mean that Christ did not die for everyone, which would be heresy. Since Christ died for all, the Blessed Virgin was also reconciled to God through Christ. The redemptive nature of Her Son's death enabled Her to enter paradise¹⁶².

Therefore, Cajetan accepted the claim that Mary was preserved from the taint of original sin, but not from the contamination of the body (*infectio carnis*), nor from the source of sin (*fomes peccati*), nor from punishment. This interpretation did not contradict Holy Scripture or the teaching of the Church. The acceptance of the claim that the Blessed Virgin, thanks to special prevenient grace, was preserved from the taint of original sin, but not from the contamination of the body (*infectio carnis*), reveals a change in the Dominican position of the Immaculate Conception. They have always explained this privilege in the light of Christ's universal redemption¹⁶³. Additionally, the Dominican noted that a similar position was held by some Franciscans, such as St. Bonaventure or Francis de Maironis¹⁶⁴.

At the end of the treatise, the Dominican raised three issues. The first was the problematic ruling of the Council in Basel, which approved the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Cajetan reminded everyone that 'the assembly in Basel at that time was neither a synod nor a council, but a schismatic assembly'¹⁶⁵.

He also drew attention to the issue of liturgical celebration, since in the Western Church the feast of conception not sanctification is celebrated, which seems to suggest that the Blessed Virgin was conceived without original sin¹⁶⁶. He noted that it is necessary to mention churches that do not celebrate conception, but sanctification, and the Church allows such liturgical celebration. Even if Catholics celebrated the feast of *Conceptio Mariae*, it would have to be celebrated because of the sanctification of the Blessed Virgin in the mother's womb: either in the case of sanctification preceding the contamination of original sin, or when it was purification from the contamination of original sin (as the maculists' position states). Therefore, all agree on the sanctification of the Blessed Virgin and the fact that it took place in the mother's womb. The

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 138.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 139.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 140-141.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

difference lies in the method of sanctification, that is, through Mary's preservation from sin, or through Her purification from the taint of sin. Therefore, as Cajetan notes, it would be wiser for everyone if the feast of Mary's conception were celebrated as sanctification, which would correspond to the truth more¹⁶⁷.

After analyzing both opinions, Cajetan formulated a final conclusion: the opinion maintaining that the Blessed Virgin was purified from original sin should be believed, while the other view, which holds that the Blessed Virgin was preserved from the taint of original sin, should at best be tolerated¹⁶⁸.

The Dominican once again recalled the opinions of many saints and theologians who unequivocally maintained Mary's purification from original sin. This claim, as Thomas de Vio Cajetan noted, is consistent with Christian tradition.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of theological writings of Dominican authors from the 13th to 16th centuries allows us to formulate the following conclusions. The Dominican stance on the conception of the Blessed Virgin, with a few exceptions, was homogenous. The doctrine developed in the 13th century, specified by Thomas Aquinas, and later adopted and deepened by all major theological authorities, was cultivated and developed over the centuries. At its core, the truth appears about the universal dimension of the first parents' sin and the universal nature of redemption accomplished by Christ. As Cajetan noted, since Christ died for all on the cross, then all have sinned. To see any exception to this fundamental truth would undermine the universal salvific dimension of Christ's work. In this context, it is necessary to emphasize the historical concept of redemption to which the Dominicans remained faithful. They based their doctrine on the truth firmly rooted in Holy Scripture that linked the fall of the first parents connected with tragic consequences of sin, in which the entire human race participated, with the universal salvific character of Christ's death on the cross.

Reflection on the holiness of the Blessed Virgin developed in a Christocentric context. According to the principles of St. Thomas Aquinas, no crea-

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

ture could be treated as equal to Christ. Only Christ was free from any sin. However, the Lord's saints, including the Virgin Mary, were burdened with the consequences of their parents' sin. The Christocentrism of Dominican soteriology was also revealed with regard to Christ, the only Mediator, whose task was to unite two separated ends. The effect of this action (union, reunion) could not exclude the Blessed Virgin. In this way, Dominican Mariology showed a close connection with Christology, especially with soteriology.

Analysis of St. Thomas Aquinas' influence on the position of the Dominican Order allows us to conclude that the writings of the Friar Preachers of the 13th century, in which they refer to the issue of the conception and sanctification of Mary, do not contain any references to St. Thomas Aquinas' works. The canonization of Aquinas in 1323 and the resolutions of general chapters in the 14th century meant that the authority of the Angelic Doctor began to shine more and more not only in the Dominican Order, but also throughout the Church, showing the growing influence on the reflection of later Dominican theologians, especially in the 15th and 16th centuries. The authors most often use Aquinas' opinions contained in the *Commentary on the Sentences* and the *Summa Theologiae*, less frequently in the *Quodlibet* and the *Compendium theologiae*. Their writings reveal that the Angelic Doctor's views became a foundation for subsequent generations of Dominicans, a starting point in polemics with supporters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The authority attributed to St. Thomas' doctrine determined the homogeneity of the Dominican position, but also the specific colour of the theology they practised.

In the centuries-long controversy surrounding the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, it may seem that the Dominicans, remaining faithful to their position and criticizing the views of the proponents of the new privilege, played a negative role. Nothing could be further from the truth! Analyzing the development of this truth, one should notice the extremely important, although thankless role played by the sons of St. Dominic. The critical stance of the Dominicans is expressed in showing the erroneous theological arguments of the Franciscans, thus forcing them to deepen and clarify their reflections and verify the sources on which the teaching of the Immaculate Conception is to be based. Thanks to critical remarks contained in one of the treatises, we know that the original form of the Holy Mass on the Immaculate Conception, written in haste by the Franciscan monk Leonardo Nogarolo, was based on inauthentic sources. The Dominicans also criticized the use of

private revelations as a source of theology, demonstrating their questionable credibility. They criticized the perfect act of mediation of Jesus Christ towards the Blessed Virgin, spread by supporters of the Immaculate Conception, stating that all people were perfectly redeemed by the One Mediator, Jesus Christ. The Dominicans demonstrated the absurdity of the Franciscan assumptionist argument that the elevation of Mary above the choirs of angels was a consequence of Her Immaculate Conception, noting that, according to some of them, after his death St. Francis was elevated above the choirs of angels. It does not imply his extraordinary holiness, not only at the moment of his birth but even until his radical conversion.

It is also worth noting that polemical writings of the Dominicans, criticizing the immaculist arguments of the Franciscans, did so from the perspective of their own theological system. The system was based on St. Thomas Aquinas thought, in which the classical concept of the universal dimension of original sin was closely linked to the universal character of redemption accomplished by Christ. The Dominicans, being faithful to the orders of the general chapters, deepened their knowledge of St. Thomas' doctrine, without ever learning about the doctrine of Duns Scotus, which was based on completely different assumptions.

A certain breakthrough in the Dominican thinking gradually began to take place after Pope Sixtus IV officially approved of the form of the Mass of the Immaculate Conception. This act deprived the Dominicans of one of the crown maculist arguments formulated by St. Thomas Aquinas (it was about the lack of official approval for the mentioned celebration of the Roman Church). It also resulted in the end of labeling immaculist views as heresy. The Dominicans had to muster the courage to thoroughly analyze the Franciscan position, and in particular, the Immaculate Conception as Mary's specific participation in the fruits of Christ's redemptive work. The position of Cajetan, who for the first time accepted the immaculistic interpretation, is a turning point in the Franciscan-Dominican debate, although he remained faithful to the traditional position of the Dominicans.

Observing the tension that accompanied theological disputes of the Franciscans and Dominicans over the centuries, it should be stated that from the perspective of the doctrine development, it served to better understand and express the truth about the Immaculate Conception. There are no winners or losers in the debate that has taken place over the centuries. Both Franciscans and Dominicans served the Church: the former, animated by a fervent

feeling of devotion to Mary Immaculate, the latter, following the path of rational criticism, demonstrating immaturity and imperfection of argumentation, thus forcing them to new, more mature solutions. All so that the truth, over time, will shine with all its beauty. A significant role in the debate surrounding the Immaculate Conception of Mary was played by St. Thomas Aquinas. When presenting his position in the Commentary on the Sentences, in the *Summa Theologiae*, and in the *Compendium theologiae*, he did not expect that it would become the foundation, the starting point in a dispute that would engage the minds of many theologians in Europe at that time.

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