

Refutation of “How Many Popes Does it Take to Deny the Immaculate Conception?”

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Opening Statement from the Article

This article is posed on [Alpha Omega Ministries](#). Here is the introduction from the article:

“During Dr. James White’s debate with Christopher Ferrara on the alleged sinlessness and Immaculate Conception of Mary, Mr. Ferrara questioned the fact that a half dozen popes taught or held a position contrary to the dogma that was later defined as the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Dr. White provided a citation to Schaff, the respected church historian, who identified seven popes, and in turn cited an earlier scholar. I’ve provided a more detailed discussion on my personal blog ([here](#)), but the following abridged version should address the main points of interest. Schaff wrote:

‘Even seven Popes are quoted on the same side, and among them three of the greatest, viz., Leo I. (who says that Christ alone was free from original sin, and that Mary obtained her purification through her conception of Christ), Gregory I., and Innocent III. [FN233 The other Popes, who taught that Mary was conceived in sin, are Gelasius I., Innocent V., John XXII., and Clement VI. (d. 1352). The proof is furnished by the Jansenist Launoy, *Præscriptions*, Opera I. pp. 17 sqq. ...’

“Launoy’s work, cited by Schaff, is in Latin. He identifies the following list of popes:

1. Leo I
2. Gelasius I
3. Gregory I
4. Roman Clergy, during a vacant seat time, after the death of Honorius I (attributed to John IV, though not by Launoy)
5. Innocent III
6. Innocent V
7. John XXII (or Benedict XII)
8. Clement VI

“You’ll notice that my list has eight items, rather than the seven that Dr. White mentioned and Schaff listed. That’s because I’m also including an item that Launoy does not specifically attribute to John IV, although others have. In the list below, where I have not explained the citation, it is what Launoy cited, but I have added to what Launoy has cited, and have explained my basis for that.”

On Dogmas and Allowable Opinions

Here is a short answer to the question “How Many Popes Does it Take to Deny the Immaculate Conception?” As long as the Immaculate Conception is not a dogma and thus is an allowable opinion, any number of popes can deny it or believe it and not be guilty of heresy. But it only takes one pope to settle the legitimate dispute if his teaching is infallible, either for or against the Immaculate Conception.

It seems the author of this article does not understand the difference between dogmas and allowable opinions, between fallible and infallible teachings. And it seems he does not understand the two ways dogmas are made, by the solemn magisterium and the ordinary magisterium.

- The solemn magisterium is all the infallible papal teachings on faith and morals. All their other teachings on faith or morals are fallible.
- The ordinary magisterium is all the teachings of the unanimous consensus of the Church Fathers on faith and morals. These teachings are infallible and are known as ordinary magisterium dogmas. Hence, individual teachings of the Church Fathers on faith and morals are not infallible, but only if all the other Church Fathers teach the same thing. The first Church Fathers during the New Covenant era were the twelve apostles. The Church Fathers were the orthodox teachers during the Old Testament era and the New Testament era until no later than the 7th century AD.
- Allowable opinions are not dogmas and thus Catholics are free to believe or not believe in them.

Therefore, if popes or other Catholics err regarding allowable opinions, it is a non-heretical error. However, if they err regarding dogmas, then that is a heretical error; hence they are heretics.

(For more information, see my article *Catechism Excerpt 1: On Revelation, Infallibility, Dogmas, Heresy, and Schism*, the section titled “[The magisterium](#)”; and see my article, [History of the Solemn and the Ordinary Magisterium](#).)

When Was Mary Free from Original sin?

It is a solemn magisterium dogma that Mary had no original sin sometime before the Incarnation

If Mary had original sin during the Incarnation, then Jesus’ human nature would have contracted original sin from her in his human nature. Consequently, he would have been guilty of original sin, not only in his human nature but also his divine nature because it is united to his human nature. And that is heresy. “In him [Jesus] there is no sin.” (1 Jn. 3:5) Hence, all the true Church Fathers taught Mary was not guilty of original sin during the Incarnation, and thus it is an ordinary magisterium dogma. And in the 8th century, it became a solemn magisterium dogma when Pope Hadrian I infallibly defined at the Second Council of Nicea that Mary had no sin [no blemish] during the Incarnation. But it does say if she never had original sin or if she was freed from it in the womb:

Second Council of Nicaea, 8th century: “The holy church of God named after Wisdom, following the tradition of the Catholic Church, has decreed what is here laid down... We also confess the two natures of the one who became incarnate for our sake from the God-bearer without blemish, Mary the ever-virgin... All those who dare to think or teach anything different... we order that they be... excommunicated.”¹

Therefore, it is a solemn magisterium dogma and an ordinary magisterium dogma that Mary had no original sin during the Incarnation.

From the information I have, it is an ordinary magisterium dogma that Mary was born without original sin

From the information I have, it is an ordinary magisterium dogma that Mary was born without sin because all the Church Fathers taught this and none denied it. But it is not a solemn magisterium dogma because no pope has infallibly defined it. Nevertheless, it is a dogma that must be believed under pain of heresy.

The allowable opinions of the Immaculate Conception vs. the Immaculate Birth but not the Immaculate Conception

Both allowable opinions uphold the ordinary magisterium dogma and solemn magisterium dogma that Mary had no original sin sometime before the Incarnation. And both uphold the ordinary magisterium dogma that Mary was born without original sin.

The allowable opinion of the Immaculate Conception states that the Blessed Virgin Mary was conceived without sin and thus never had the stain of original sin.

The allowable opinion of the Immaculate Birth but not the Immaculate Conception states that Mary was born immaculate (free from original sin) but not conceived immaculate. And thus she was cleansed from original sin in the womb. According to this opinion, Mary was stained with original sin at one time and thus under the control of the Devil, before she was sanctified in the womb.

The allowable opinions deal with how Mary was free from original sin before her birth. According to the Immaculate Conception, Mary was preserved from falling into original sin and thus never had it. According to the Immaculate Birth but not the Immaculate Conception, Mary was cleansed from original sin in the womb.

Hence It Is Not Heresy to Deny the Immaculate Conception

Hence it is not heresy to deny Immaculate Conception because it has not been infallibly defined by the ordinary magisterium or the solemn magisterium, and thus it is not a dogma. Therefore, Catholics are free to deny or believe the Immaculate Conception, as both are allowable opinions. Whichever opinion is wrong, it is a non-heretical error.

¹ Definition

In 1854, Pius IX attempted to infallibly define the Immaculate Conception and thus make it a solemn magisterium dogma; but he was an apostate antipope, and hence his definition was null and void.

At the time of Pius IX's attempted infallible definition, most if not all agreed that the Immaculate Conception was not yet a dogma and fervently petitioned Pius IX to infallibly settle the dispute that was raging, especially since the 13th century.

Consequently, all the teachings for or against the Immaculate Conception by popes, Church Fathers, theologians, and apostate antipopes before 1854 were fallible. And all the teachings since then are also fallible because Pius IX decree was null and void. Hence, pitting Church Fathers, popes, theologians, and apostate antipopes against one another will not solve the problem until a true pope either infallibly defines or infallibly condemns the Immaculate Conception.

When the “Word” All means Almost All

When the Bible or a pope uses the word “all,” it does not always literally mean all. Here are two commentaries from The Catholic Bible that I revised:

“The Lord hath looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there be any that understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are become unprofitable together: there is none that doth good, no not one.” (Ps. 13:2)

Ps. 13:1. **There is none that doth good:** [RJMI: In context, none means almost none. For there were so very few that did good and did not turn out of the way (such as Abraham, Moses, Job, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, St. Anne, St. John, etc.) that it may be said that none did good and all turned out of the way. St. Paul repeats this verse in Rom. 3:10-12. Certainly, after his conversion, St. Paul was not guilty of any of the sins he mentions in the following verses nor did he turn away from God. In the same way, the word “all” is used many times in the Bible to not literally mean all but almost all. (See commentary on Rom. 3:23.)]

“For all have sinned, and do need the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23)

Rom. 3:23. **All have sinned:** [RJMI: All have sinned, in this context, means all men except Jesus and Mary. Even though some men may not have committed any voluntary sin (aka voluntary sin), all men (except Jesus and Mary) inherit original sin and thus are born guilty of original sin. Many times in the Bible the word “all” does not literally mean all but *almost* all. For example, Genesis 6:12 says that during the time of Noe “*all* flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth”; and in Genesis 6:17 God says “Behold I will bring the waters of a great flood upon the earth to destroy *all* flesh...” Yet Noe and his seven family members were not corrupted and not destroyed by the flood. In this case, then, the word “all” means almost all with the exception of Noe and his seven family members, as Genesis 6:9 says that “Noe was a just and perfect man in his generations, he walked with God.” The Bible says that all the citizens in Judea and Jerusalem were baptized by John: “And there went out to him all the country of Judea and all they of Jerusalem and were baptized by him.” (Mk. 1:5) Yet the Pharisees, Sadducees, and many other Jews were not baptized by John. Hence the word “all” in this case means many. (See commentary on Ps. 13:1.)]

So when a pope or other Catholics or apostate antipope says “all have sinned,” it cannot be taken for certain that Mary is included in that statement. The same applies to the word “only” and the word “alone” when it means only.

Evidence from the Article “How Many Popes Does it Take to Deny the Immaculate Conception?”

Pope St. Leo the Great (d. 461)

Believed in the Immaculate Birth and maybe the Immaculate Conception

The quotes in article from Pope St. Leo the Great, when taken in context, do not definitively deny the Immaculate Conception. In the following quotes from the article, Leo seems to teach that Mary was not conceived nor born free from sin:

Pope St. Leo the Great, *Sermon 25*: “When by the condition of birth, there is one cause of perishing for all. And so among the sons of men, the Lord Jesus alone was born innocent, since he alone was conceived without the pollution of carnal concupiscence.”

Pope St. Leo the Great, *Sermon 28*: “3. ...And therefore in the general ruin of the entire human race there was but one remedy in the secret of the Divine plan which could succor the fallen, and that was that one of the sons of Adam should be born free and innocent of original transgression, to prevail for the rest both by his example and his merits. Still further, because this was not permitted by natural generation, and because there could be no offspring from our faulty stock without seed, of which the Scripture saith, ‘Who can make a clean thing conceived of an unclean seed? is it not Thou who art alone?’”

But in the following quotes, he teaches that Mary had no sin during the Incarnation:

Pope St. Leo the Great, *Sermon 34*: “Is there anything whatever its quality which could pollute the essence of that eternal and immaterial Light? - seeing that by allying himself to that creature [Mary], which he had made after his own image, he furnished it [Mary] with purification and received no stain, and healed the wounds of its weakness without suffering loss of power.”

Pope St. Leo the Great, *Sermon 29*: “By the Spirit, Christ is born from the body of his unsullied Mother, by the same Spirit, the Christians is reborn from the womb of holy Church.”²

And in the following quote, he teaches that Mary was born without sin and maybe even conceived without sin:

Pope St. Leo the Great, *Sermon 22*, Chapter 3: “And to this end, without male seed Christ was conceived of a Virgin, who was fecundated not by human intercourse but by the Holy Spirit. And whereas in all mothers conception does not take place without stain of sin, this one [Mary] received purification from the source of her conception.”

² 1; PL 54, 227.

So in Sermon 25 he says

Sermon 25: “the Lord Jesus alone was born innocent”

And in Sermon 28 he says

Sermon 28: “But one remedy... which could succor the fallen, and that was that one of the sons of Adam should be born free and innocent of original transgression,”

But in Sermon 34 and 29, he teaches Mary was free from original sin during the Incarnation:

Sermon 34: “He furnished it [Mary] with purification”

Sermon 29: “Christ is born from the body of his unsullied Mother”

And Sermon 22, he teaches she was born without original and maybe from conception and thus never had original sin:

Sermon 22: “This one [Mary] received purification from the source of her conception.”

Hence Leo’s use of the words “alone,” “one,” and “no offspring” in Sermons 25 and 28 are not literal because it admits to the exceptions in his other sermons that Mary was free from original sin during the Incarnation, she was born free from original sin, and maybe conceived without original sin.

With this in mind, the words “no one” in the following quote can mean almost “no one”:

Pope St. Leo the Great, *Sermon 21*, Chapter 1: “Truly foreign to this nativity is that which we read of all others, ‘no one is clean from stain, not even the infant who has lived but one day upon earth.’ Nothing therefore of the lust of the flesh has passed into that peerless nativity, nothing of the law of sin has entered.”

“No one” or “nothing” can mean almost no one and almost nothing in the same way St. Paul’s “all have sinned” in Romans 5:12 means almost all, as he did not mention Jesus as an exception, which leave open the possibility that Mary is also an exception.³

For the sake of argument, even if Pope St. Leo the Great did teach or believe that Mary was conceived in sin and thus denied the Immaculate Conception, his teachings on this topic are fallible, mere allowable opinions, and thus not dogmatic.

St. Ambrose (d. 397)

Believed in the Immaculate Birth and maybe the Immaculate Conception

The article’s quote from St. Ambrose that tries to prove that he denied the Immaculate Conception is definitely taken out of context, especially when his other teachings on the topic are considered. Here is the quote from the article:

³ See in the article [When the “Word” All means Almost All](#), p. 6.

St. Ambrose, *Exposition of the Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke*: “For wholly alone of those born of woman was our Holy Lord Jesus, who by the strangeness of his undefiled birth has not suffered the pollutions of earthly corruption, but dispelled them by heavenly majesty.”⁴

So it seems he is teaching that Mary was born in sin if one takes the word “alone” as literal and thus with no exceptions. But in the same paragraph, previous to the above quote, he says the following about Mary:

Ibid: “The brining forth of the Virgin was promised in the words of the law. And truly holy, because undefiled.”

Therefore, in the very least, he is teaching the Mary was born without sin. Hence the word “alone of those born of women” does not apply to Mary, as she would be an exception.

The following quotes could be taken to mean Mary was either conceived immaculate or only born immaculate:

St. Ambrose, *Exposition of the Holy Gospel According to Saint Luke*, 4th century: “9... This salutation was kept for Mary alone, for she alone is well said to be full of grace,⁵ she who alone obtained the grace which no other women had deserved, that she should be filled with the author of grace.”⁶

St. Ambrose, *Exposition on Psalm 118*, Commentary on Psalm 118-22-30: “Come, then, and search out your sheep, not through your servants or hired men, but do it yourself. Lift me up bodily and in the flesh, which is fallen in Adam. Lift me up not from Sarah but from Mary, a Virgin not only undefiled but a Virgin whom grace had made inviolate, free of every stain of sin.”

St Augustine (d. 430)

May have believed in the Immaculate Conception

The article quotes St. Augustine who quotes St. Ambrose to try and prove that Mary was not only conceived in sin but also born in sin:

St. Augustine, *The Grace of Christ and on Original Sin*, Book 2, On Original Sin, Chapter 4 (sentences from Ambrose⁷ on Original sin):

“It was no cohabitation with a husband which opened the secrets of the Virgin’s womb; rather was it the Holy Spirit which infused immaculate seed into her unviolated womb. For the Lord Jesus alone of those who are born of woman is holy, inasmuch as he experienced not the contact of earthly corruption, by reason of the novelty of his immaculate birth; nay, he repelled it by his heavenly majesty.”

⁴ Book 2, Par. 56; *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam*, 2.56, PL 15:1572D-1573A.

⁵ Here is an example of when the word “alone” has exceptions, because Jesus Christ was also full of grace from his human conception. If taken literally it would mean the Incarnate Jesus Christ was not full of grace.

⁶ b. 2.

⁷ St. Ambrose teaches that Mary was born without sin! Hence the word “alone” (which means only) in the following quote means almost only, just the word “all” can mean almost all, because it excludes Mary, as proved from the other teachings of St. Ambrose on this topic, as shown above.

If the word “alone” is taken literally, then it means Mary was conceived in sin but does not say if she was born in sin or not. But St. Augustine’s other teachings prove that the word “alone” in the above quote is not literal and thus admits to Mary as an exception. In the following quote, he teaches the possibility of the Immaculate Conception:

St. Augustine, *On the Nature of Grace*, 415: “We must except the holy Virgin Mary [from the saints], concerning whom I wish to raise no question when it touches the subject of sins, out of honour to the Lord. For from this only we might know that more abundant grace was conferred upon her that she should overcome sin on all sides, because she merited to conceive and bring forth him who it is clear had no sin.”⁸

From what has just been quoted, one can say that St. Augustine is speaking about voluntary sins, and thus that Mary never committed a sin. Hence, the exception of her being free from original sin does not apply. But the rest of the quote leaves no doubt that he is teaching that Mary was free from original sin. He speaks of saints who never were guilty of a voluntary sin, who never committed a sin. But he says, they too have sin, original sin, even though they never committed a sin. And he quotes St. John to prove this:

Ibid: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us?” (1 Jn. 1:18)

The sin, then, of these saints who have never committed a sin is original sin. It is these saints that he compares to Mary when he says,

“We must except the holy Virgin Mary [from the saints], concerning whom I wish to raise no question when it touches the subject of sins.”

Hence is not referring only to voluntary sins (which these saints did not commit) but original sin which these saints were guilty of but not Mary. Therefore, when St. John says, “If we say have no sin...the true is not in us,” he does not include Mary, nor Jesus for that matter. Here is the rest of the quote.

Ibid: “Well, then, if, with this exception of the Virgin, we could only assemble together all the forementioned holy men and women, and ask them whether they lived without sin whilst they were in this life, what can we suppose would be their answer? Would it be in the language of our author, or in the words of the Apostle John? I put it to you, whether, on having such a question submitted to them, however excellent might have been their sanctity in this body, they would not have exclaimed with one voice: ‘If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us?’”

“Well, then, if, with this exception of the Virgin... ‘If we say we have no sin...the truth is not in us.’” While St. Augustine teaches Mary was free from original sin, he does not say when.

If this following quote is truly from St. Augustine, then he teaches the Immaculate Conception. It is in *The Glories of Mary* by the apostate Alphonsus de Liguori. But he does not give the source, and I have not yet been able to find the source:

⁸ c. 42 [36]; PL 44:267.

The Glories of Mary, by apostate Alphonsus de Liguori, 18th century: “St. Augustine says, ‘that the Son of God never made himself a more worthy dwelling than Mary, who was never possessed by the enemy or despoiled of her ornaments.’”⁹

To “never be possessed by the enemy” means to never of had any sin and thus even original sin. For if Mary had original sin, she would have been possessed by the enemy even if for a short while.

In the very least St. Augustine believed that Mary was free from original sin but does not say when. And even though he may not have explicitly taught the Immaculate Birth, he did not deny it either. Hence he leaves open its possibility. Therefore, his opinion would not have denied the ordinary magisterium dogma that Mary was born without sin. But if the above quote from *The Glories of Mary* is his, then he did teach the Immaculate Birth and also the Immaculate Conception.

Pope St. Gelasius (d. 496)

Inconclusive Evidence

The following quote from Pope St. Gelasius in the article is not verified. It says it is his fifth or seventh letter, both of which I have. And it does not contain the quote.

The Article: “Launoy cites Gelasius’ fifth letter. I found it elsewhere identified as his seventh letter. Regardless, it is written to the Picenian Bishops. It states:

‘Accordingly whatever those parents produced of their stock, is indeed the work of God, according to the institution of nature, but not without the contagion of that evil which they derived through their own transgression.’ ”

This quote is teaching how original sin was handed down to mankind from Adam and Eve. It does not address the possibility that Mary could have been exempted from original sin, just as St. Paul’s “all have sinned” does not mean all but almost all.

The following quotes from Pope St. Gelasius in the article is also not verified. I cannot find the source. It teaches that only Jesus had no sin:

The Article: “Launoy also cites Gelasius ‘Lib. contra Pelagium,’ which I found elsewhere cited as as ‘dicta adv. Pelag. haeresin.,’ which in any event means it is a work against the Pelagians. It states: ‘It belongs alone to the immaculate Lamb to have no sin at all.’”

Again, the word “alone” meaning only may mean almost only and thus include exceptions, such as Mary; and thus she too had “no sin at all.” And it could mean Mary had original sin but was freed from it sometime before the Incarnation.

For the sake of the argument, if Pope St. Gelasius did deny the Immaculate Conception, his teachings on this topic are fallible.

⁹ Part 2, Discourse 1 (Of Mary’s Immaculate Conception), p. 269:

Pope St. Gregory the Great (d. 604)

Believed in the Immaculate Conception

Here is the quote from Pope Gregory the Great in the article:

Pope St. Gregory the Great, *Book of Morals*, Book 18: “84. ...For we, though we are made holy, yet are not born holy, because by the mere constitution of a corruptible nature we are tied and bound, that we should say with the Prophet, Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me. But he only is truly born holy, Who in order that he might get the better of that same constitution of a corruptible nature, was not conceived by the combining of carnal conjunction.”

If the words “only he [Jesus] is truly born holy” are literal, then it means Mary was not born free from original sin. But we know it is not literal and thus Mary is an exception because elsewhere he teaches, by implication, the Immaculate Conception when he says Mary is not only blessed above all women, but also above all the saints and even the angels in rank and thus in holiness. Hence, by implication, she could have never had original sin and thus never have been under the dominion of the Devil:

Pope St. Gregory the Great, *Commentary of 1 Kings 1*: “The most blessed and ever Virgin Mary, Mother of God, can be called by this name, ‘mountain.’ Yes, she was a mountain, who by the dignity of her election has completely surpassed the height of every elect creature. Is Mary not the lofty mountain? For God, to achieve the conception of the eternal Word, raised the summit of her merits above the choirs of angels, up to the threshold of the Godhead. Isaiah said in a prophecy, ‘In the last days, the mountain of the LORD’s house will be made the highest mountain’ (Is 2:2). And this mountain has been made the highest mountain, because Mary’s height has shined out above all the saints. For, just as a mountain implies height, so the house signifies a dwelling place. Therefore she is called mountain and house, because she, illuminated by incomparable merits, prepared a holy womb for God’s Only-begotten to dwell in. On the other hand, Mary would not have become a mountain raised above the peaks of the mountains had not the divine fecundity raised her above the angels.... For him whom the Virgin bore was not only a holy man but also the mighty God. Elizabeth refers to this fruit when she greets the Virgin and says, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb’ (LK 1:42).”¹⁰

Pope St. Gregory the Great, *Homilies on the Gospels*, Homily 38, 593: “He united the Holy Church to him, through the mystery of the Incarnation. Now, the bridal chamber of this Bridegroom was the womb of the Virgin Mother. That is why the Psalmist says, ‘He has set his tabernacle in the sun: and he is as a Bridegroom coming out of his bridal chamber.’”(Ps. 18:6). And it was as a Bridegroom is in fact that he came forth from his bridal chamber, because to unite the Church to himself, the Incarnate God went forth from the inviolate womb of the Virgin.”¹¹

The article also contains this quote from Pope St. Gregory the Great:

¹⁰ 1:5; *PL* 79:25-26.

¹¹ 2, 28, 3; (*PL*, 76, 1283).

Pope St. Gregory the Great: *Selected Epistles*, Book 7, Epistle 30: “Moreover, since no one among men in this world is without sin (and what else is sinning but flying from GOD?), I say confidently that this my daughter also has some sins.”

Firstly, the author is using a little deception here. The “daughter also [who] has some sins is not the Mary. It is lady Dominica.

Ibid: “Further, greet in my behalf my glorious daughters, the lady Dominica and the lady Eudochia. But, inasmuch as I hear that it is now a long time since the aforesaid lady Dominica was made a prioress.”

Also, when Gregory says “no one among men in this world is without sin,” he means almost no one because he does include Jesus. And he does not include Mary because he believes Mary was free from all sin: “The Incarnate God went forth from the inviolate womb of the Virgin.”

The same, then, applies to the following quote in the article when it says “no one is without sin.” It means almost no one and thus does not include Jesus and Mary:

Pope St. Gregory the Great, *Selected Epistles*, Book XII, Epistle I: “And what a thing it would be, were we to neglect for the salvation of the soul what we carefully attend to in matters of earthly concern! And so, since, according to the words of the Apostle John, no one is without sin, let us call to mind enticements of thought, incontinence of tongue, deeds of transgression; and let us, while we may, with great knocking, do away with the stains of our iniquities, that our just and loving Redeemer may not execute vengeance according to our deservings, but according to His mercy be bent to pardon.”

We know it does not apply to Mary because Pope St. Gregory teaches that Mary was free from all sin during the Incarnation and more pure than all the saints and angels; and thus, by implication, she never even had original sin.

For the sake of the argument, if Pope St. Gregory the Great did deny the Immaculate Conception, his teachings on this topic are fallible.

Pope John IV (d. 642)

Inconclusive Evidence

I cannot find the source of the following Letter 1 by Pope John IV, as quoted in the article. Here is the source as contained in the article:

The Article: “John IV, Epistola I, ad Episcopos et Presbyteros Scotiae, PL 80:602B-C; see John Harvey Treat, *The Catholic Faith, or Doctrines of the Church of Rome Contrary to Scripture and the Teaching of the Primitive Church* (Nashotah, WI: The Bishop Welles Brotherhood, 1888), p. 22.”

Nevertheless, the quote does not definitively prove that John IV denied the Immaculate Conception. Here is the quote from the article:

Pope John IV, *Letter 1*, 7th century: “And in the first place it is foolish blasphemy to say that man is without sin; which can by no means be, except the one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, Who was conceived and born without sin. For other men born with original sin, even though living without actual sin, are known to bear testimony to the prevarication of Adam; according to the Prophet saying: ‘For behold in iniquities was I conceived, and in sin did my mother conceive me.’ (Psalm 51:5).”

Even if he is teaching that Mary was born in sin, we know he does not mean she was not freed from original sin some time before the Incarnation or else she would have passed original sin on to Jesus when his human nature was conceived in her womb. Hence he would not have denied the solemn magisterium dogma that Mary had no original sin or any other sin when the Incarnation took place.

Also if the quote is accurate when it says “For other men born with original sin,” then this refers only to men born in original sin and thus does not apply to Mary, as she was not born with original sin. Hence he may believe Mary was born without original sin.

Either way, his teachings on this topic are fallible.

Apostate Antipope Innocent III (d. 1216)

Believed in the Immaculate Birth by not the Immaculate Conception

Here are the quotes from the article:

Apostate Antipope Innocent III, *Sermon on the Purification of the Virgin*: “But forthwith [upon the Angel’s words, ‘The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee’] the Holy Ghost came upon her. He had before come into her, when, in her mother’s womb, he cleansed her soul from original sin.”

Apostate Antipope Innocent III, *Sermon on the Assumption*, Sermon 2: “Eve was produced without sin, but she brought forth in sin; Mary was produced in sin, but she brought forth without sin.”

Apostate Antipope Innocent III, *On the Feast of St. John the Baptist*, Sermon 16, On Feast Days: “Of John the Angel does not speak of the conception but of the birth. But of Jesus he predicts alike the Birth and the Conception. For to Zechariah the father it is predicted, ‘Thy wife shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John,’ but to Mary the mother it is predicted, ‘Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bear a Son, and shalt call His Name Jesus.’ For John was conceived in fault, but Christ Alone was conceived without fault. But each was born in grace, and therefore the Nativity of each is celebrated, but the Conception of Christ alone is celebrated.”

His teachings are null and void because he was an apostate antipope. But even if he were the pope, his above teachings are fallible. As a side note, he teaches the error that St. John the Baptist was born free from original sin.¹²

¹² See my book *Baptism Controversy Revision*: Being filled with the Holy Spirit does not always mean the remission of sins: [St. John the Baptist](#).

Apostate Antipope Innocent V (d. 1276)

Believed in the Immaculate Birth but not the Immaculate Conception

Here is an abbreviate quote from the article:

Apostate Antipope Innocent V, *Commentary of apostate Peter Lombard's Sentences*, Book 3, Distinction 3, Question 1, Article 1:

“The nearer any one approaches to the Holy of Holies, so much the greater degree of sanctification ought he to have, for there is no approach to him, except through sanctification. But the mother approaches more than all to the Son, Who is the Holy of Holies; therefore, she ought to have a greater degree of sanctification after her Son. The degree of sanctification may be understood as fourfold: either that one have sanctity (1) before conception and birth; (2) after conception and birth; (3) in the conception itself and birth; (4) in birth, not in conception...

“4) There remains then the fourth. But this has four degrees... The third seems suitable and piously credible, although it be not derived from Scripture, that she should have been sanctified, soon after her animation, either on the very day or hour, although not at the same moment.”

His teaching is null and void because he was an apostate antipope. But even if he were the pope, his above teaching is fallible.

Apostate Antipope John XXII (d. 1334) or Benedict XII (d. 1342)

Believed in the Immaculate Birth but not the Immaculate Conception

Here is the quote from the article:

Apostate John XXII or Benedict XIII, *Sermon 1*, on the Assumption: “She (the Virgin) passed, first, from a state of original sin, second, from a state of childhood to maternal honor, third, from misery to glory.”

His teaching is null and void because he was an apostate antipope. But even if he were the pope, his above teaching is fallible.

Apostate Antipope Clement VI (d. 1352)

Believed in the Immaculate Birth but not the Immaculate Conception

Here is an abbreviated quote from apostate Antipope Clement IV from the article:

Apostate Antipope Clement IV, *Sermon 1*, on the Lord's Advent (aka *Segua erunt sole*): “The Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin, as many saints seem to say... It was but a little hour that she was in original sin, because according to all she was sanctified as soon as she could be sanctified.”

His teaching is null and void because he was an apostate antipope. But even if he were the pope, his above teaching is fallible.

Some Who Believed or May Have Believed in the Immaculate Conception

Nominal Catholic Encyclopedia

Nominal *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Immaculate Conception:

In regard to the sinlessness of Mary the older Fathers are very cautious; some of them even seem to have been in error on this matter... But these stray private opinions merely serve to show that theology is a progressive science. If we were to attempt to set forth the full doctrine of the Fathers on the sanctity of the Blessed Virgin, which includes particularly the implicit belief in the immaculateness of her conception, we should be forced to transcribe a multitude of passages. In the testimony of the Fathers two points are insisted upon: her absolute purity and her position as the second Eve (cf. I Cor. 15:22).

Mary is the Second Eve

This celebrated comparison between [Eve](#), while yet immaculate and incorrupt; that is to say, not subject to original sin and the Blessed Virgin is developed by:

- Justin (*Dialog, cum Tryphone*, 100)
- Irenaeus (*Contra Haereses*, III. xxii.)
- Tertullian (*De carne Christi*, xvii)
- Julius Firmicus Maternus (*De errore profan. reli*)
- Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catecheses*, xii. 29).
- Epiphanius (*Haeres.*, lxxviii. 18)
- Theodotus of Ancyra (*Or. in S. Deip* n. 11).
- and Sedulius (*Carmen paschale*, II. 28).

The absolute purity of Mary

Patristic writings on Mary's purity abound.

- The Fathers call Mary the tabernacle exempt from defilement and corruption (Hippolytus, “*Omtt. in illud. Dominus pascit me*”);
- Origen calls her worthy of God, immaculate of the immaculate, most complete sanctity, perfect justice, neither deceived by the persuasion of the serpent, nor infected with his poisonous breathings (“*Hom. I, in diversa*”);

- Ambrose says she is incorrupt, a virgin immune through grace from every stain of sin ("*Sermo xxii* in Ps. Cxviii");
- Maximum of Turin calls her a dwelling fit for Christ, not because of her habit of body, but because of original grace ("*Nom. viii de Natali Domini*");
- Theodotus of Ancvra terms her a virgin innocent, without spot, void of culpability, holy in body and in soul, a lily springing among thorns, untaught the ills of Eve nor was there any communion in her of light with darkness, and, when not yet born, she was consecrated to God ("*Orat. in S. Dei Genitr.*");
- In refuting Pelagius St. Augustine declares that all the just have truly known of sin "except the Holy Virgin Mary, of whom, for the honour of the Lord. I will have no question whatever where sin is concerned" ("*De natura et gratia*" 36);
- Mary was pledged to Christ (Peter Cluysologus. "*Sermo cxi de Annunt. B.M.V.*");
- It is evident and notorious, notorious that she was pure from eternity, exempt from every defect (Typicon S. Sabae);
- She was formed without any stain (St. Proclus, "*Laudatio in S. Dei Gen. ort.*", I. 3);
- She was created in a condition more sublime and glorious than all other natures (Theodoras of Jerusalem in Mansi. XII. 1140):
- When the Virgin Mother of God was to be born of Anne, nature did not dare to anticipate the germ of grace, but remained devoid of fruit (John Damascene, "*Hom, i in B. V. Nativ.*", ii).
- The Syrian Fathers never tire of extolling the sinlessness of Mary. St. Ephraem considers no terms of eulogy too high to describe the excellence of Mary's grace and sanctity: 'Most holy Lady, Mother of God, alone most pure in soul and body, alone exceeding all perfection of purity, alone made in thy entirety the home of all the graces of the Most Holy Spirit, and hence exceeding beyond all compare even the angelic virtues in purity and sanctity of soul and body my Lady most holy, all-pure, all-immaculate, all-stainless, all-undefiled, all-incorrupt, all-inviolable spotless robe of him who clothes himself with light as with a garment . . . flower unfading, purple woven by God, alone most immaculate' ("*Precationes ad Deiparam*" in Opp. Graec. Lat., III, 524-37).
- To St. Ephraem she was as innocent as Eve before her fall, a virgin most estranged from every stain of sin, more holy than the Seraphim, the sealed fountain of the Holy Spirit, the pure seed of God, ever in body and in mind intact, and immaculate ("*Cannina Nisibena*").
- Jacob of Santa says that "the very fact that God has elected her proves that none was ever holier than Mary; if any stain had disfigured her soul, if any other virgin had been purer and holier, God would have selected her and rejected Mary."

John Damascene ("*Or. i Nativ. Deip.*" n. 2) esteems the supernatural influence of God at the generation of Mary to be so comprehensive that he extends it also to her parents. He says of them

that, during the generation, they were filled and purified by the Holy Spirit, and freed from sexual concupiscence. Consequently according to the Damascene, even the human element of her origin, the material of which she was formed, was pure and holy.¹³ This opinion of an immaculate active generation and the sanctity of the “*conceptio carnis*” was taken up by some Western authors; it was put forward by Petrus Comestor in his treatise against St. Bernard and by others.

From this summary the belief in Mary’s immunity from sin in her conception was prevalent amongst the Fathers, especially those of the Greek Church.

St. Hippolytus, 2nd and 3rd centuries (May have believed in)

St. Hippolytus, *Discourse on Psalm 23*, 200: “The ark which was made of incorruptible timber (Ex. 15:10) was the Saviour. They are symbolized the tabernacle of his body [Mary], which was impervious to decay and engendered not sinful corruption... The Lord was sinless, because, in his humanity, he was fashioned out of incorruptible wood, that is, out of the Virgin and the Holy Spirit, lined within and without as with the purest gold of the Word of God.”¹⁴

The words Mary was “impervious to decay” most probably means she never had original sin.

St. Hippolytus, *Discourse on the End of the World*, 217: “Thus, too, they (the prophets) preached of the advent of God in the flesh to the world, his advent by the spotless and God-bearing (theotokos) Mary in the way of birth and growth.”

Apostate Origen, 2nd and 3rd centuries, (Believed in)

Apostate Origen, Homily 1, 244: “This Virgin Mother of the Only-begotten of God is called Mary, worthy of God, Immaculate of the immaculate, one of the one.”

Nominal *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Immaculate Conception: “Origen calls her worthy of God, immaculate of the immaculate, most complete sanctity, perfect justice, neither deceived by the persuasion of the serpent, nor infected with his poisonous breathings (“*Hom. i in diversa*”).”

Apostate Gregory Thaumaturgus, 3rd century (Believed in)

Apostate Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Homily on the Annunciation of the Holy Virgin Mary*, 262 “Among all nations she alone was both virgin and mother and without knowledge of man, holy in body and soul. Among all nations, she alone was made worthy to bring forth God; alone she carried in her, him who carries all by his word.

“Let us chant the melody that has been taught us by the inspired harp of David, and say, ‘Arise, O Lord, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy sanctuary.’ For the Holy Virgin is in truth an ark, wrought with gold both within and without, that has received the whole treasury of the sanctuary.

“The Holy Virgin herself is both an honorable Temple of God and a shrine made pure, a golden altar of burnt offerings, by reason of her surpassing purity, ‘She is the door which looks eastward’ (Ezekiel 44) and by the comings and goings forth, the

¹³ On how this occurred, see my article [The Miracle of the Immaculate Conception](#).

¹⁴ Fragment quoted by Theodore, *Dialogue*, 1 (PG 10: 804-865); contained in *Mary in the Documents of the Church*, by Paul F. Palmer, S.J., S.T.D. 1952. Pt. 2, sec. 2, p. 15.

whole earth is illuminated... She is the boast of virgins and the joy of mothers, the declaration of archangels, even as it was spoken: 'Be thou glad and rejoice, the Lord is with thee!

"A bulwark of imperishable life hath the holy Virgin become unto us... with his handmaid, her that is unspotted, the Lord of glory halloweth all.

"Holy and wise was the all blessed Virgin; in all ways peerless among nations and unrivaled among women. Not as the first virgin Eve, who being alone in the garden, was led astray by the serpent and so took his advice and brought death into the world and thus has been the suffering of all saints. But in her alone, this holy Virgin Mary, the Stem of Life hath shot up for us. For she alone was spotless in soul and body...

"Hail thou, bodily temple of God! Hail thou, the equal home of heaven and earth alike!"

Theodotus of Ancrya, 3rd and 4th centuries (May have believe in)

Theodotus of Ancrya, *Homily 6*: "1. ...[Mary], a virgin, innocent, spotless, free of all defect, untouched, unsullied, holy in soul and body, like a lily sprouting among thorns."

St. Athanasius, 3rd and fourth centuries (Believed in)

St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*: "8. ...He (Christ) took it (his body) from a pure and unstained Virgin, who had not known man."

St. Athanasius, *Homily of the Papyrus of Turin*, 4th century: "O noble Virgin, truly you are greater than any other greatness. For who is your equal in greatness, O dwelling place of God the Word? To whom among all creatures shall I compare you, O Virgin? You are greater than them all. O Covenant, clothed with purity instead of gold! You are the Ark in which is found the golden vessel containing the true manna, that is, the flesh in which divinity resides. Should I compare you to the fertile earth and its fruits? You surpass them, for it is written: 'The earth is my footstool.' (Is 66:1) But you carry within you the feet, the head, and the entire body of the perfect God.

"If I say that heaven is exalted, yet it does not equal you, for it is written: 'Heaven is my throne' (ibid.), while you are God's place of repose. If I say that the angels and archangels are great—but you are greater than them all, for the angels and archangels serve with trembling the one who dwells in your womb, and they dare not speak in his presence, while you speak to him freely.

"If we say that the cherubim are great, you are greater than they, for the cherubim carry the throne of God (cf. Ps 80:1; 99:1), while you hold God in your hands. If we say that the seraphim are great, you are greater than them all, for the seraphim cover their faces with their wings (cf. Is 6:2), unable to look upon the perfect glory, while you not only gaze upon his face but caress it and offer your breasts to his holy mouth....

"As for Eve, she is the mother of the dead, 'for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' (1 Cor 15:22) Eve took from the tree and made her husband eat of it along with her. And so they ate of that tree of which God had told them: 'The day you eat of it, you shall die' (Gen 2:17). Eve took from it, ate some of it, and gave some to her husband with her. He ate of it, and he died.

“In you, instead, O wise Virgin, dwells the Son of God. He, that is, who is the tree of life. Truly he has given us his body, and we have eaten of it. That is how life came to all, and all have come to life by the mercy of God, your beloved Son. That is why your spirit is full of joy in God your Savior!”¹⁵

St Ephrem the Syrian, 4th century, (Believed in)

Nominal *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Immaculate Conception: “St. Ephraem considers no terms of eulogy too high to describe the excellence of Mary’s grace and sanctity: ‘Most holy Lady, Mother of God, alone most pure in soul and body, alone exceeding all perfection of purity, alone made in thy entirety the home of all the graces of the Most Holy Spirit, and hence exceeding beyond all compare even the angelic virtues in purity and sanctity of soul and body My Lady most holy, all-pure, all-immaculate, all-stainless, all-undefiled, all-incorrupt, all-inviolable spotless robe of him who clothes himself with light as with a garment . . . flower unfading, purple woven by God, alone most immaculate’ (*“Precationes ad Deiparam”* in Opp. Graec. Lat., III, 524-37)... To St. Ephraem she [Mary] was as innocent as Eve before her fall, a virgin most estranged from every stain of sin, more holy than the Seraphim, the sealed fountain of the Holy Spirit, the pure seed of God, ever in body and in mind intact, and immaculate (*“Cannina Nisibena”*).”

St. Ephrem the Syrian, *Carmina Nisibena*, 361: “Only you [Jesus] and your Mother are more beautiful than everything. For on you, O Lord, there is not mark; neither is there any stain in your Mother.”¹⁶

St. Ephrem the Syrian: “Mary and Eve, two people without guilt, two simple people, were identical. Later, however, one became the cause of our death, the other the cause of our life.”¹⁷

St. Ambrose, 4th century (May have believed in)

(See in this article, [Believed in the Immaculate Birth and maybe the Immaculate Conception](#), p. 8)

Apostate Gregory Nazianzen, 4th century (May have believed in)

Apostate Gregory of Nazianzen, *Sermon* 38, 390: “He was conceived by the virgin, who had been first purified by the Spirit in soul and body; for, as it was fitting that childbearing should receive its share of honor, so it was necessary that virginity should receive even greater honor.”

St. Augustine, 4th and 5th centuries (May have believed in)

(See in this article [St Augustine \(d. 430\)](#), p. 9.)

¹⁵ d. T. Lefort, in *Le Muséon* 71 (1958): 216-217.

¹⁶ 27:8.

¹⁷ *Op. Syr. II*: 37. Written ca. 360 A.D.

St. Maximus of Turin, 4th to 5th centuries, (Believed in)

Maximus of Turin, *Sermon 4*, On the Nativity of the Lord II:: “Therefore, he is Son of divinity; of divinity, I say, incorrupt, integral, complete. I plainly understand a mystery; for, therefore, the nativity is fruitful through the immaculate Mary.”¹⁸

St. Proclus of Constantinople, 4th and 5th centuries (Believed in)

St. Proclus of Constantinople, *Homily 1*, 5th century: “As he formed her without any stain of her own, so he proceeded from her contracting no stain.”

St. Proclus of Constantinople, *Homily 4*, 5th century: “2. ...O Virgin, mother without the corruption of birth, where did you get the wool from which you prepared the garment that today clothed the Master of the world? Where did you find the uterine loom on which you wove the seamless garment?”

St. Proclus of Constantinople, *Homily 5*, 5th century: “O man, run through all creation with your thought and see if there exists anything comparable to or greater than the holy Virgin, Mother of God. Circle the whole world, explore all the oceans, survey the air, question the skies, consider all the unseen powers, and see if there exists any other similar wonder in the whole creation. . . . Count, then, the portents and wonder at the superiority of the Virgin; she alone, in a way beyond words, received into her bridal chamber him before whom all creation kneels with fear and trembling.”¹⁹

St. Vincent of Lerins, 4th and 5th centuries (May have believed in)

St. Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium* 15:9, c. 434: “From this unity of Person it follows, by reason of a like mystery, that, since the flesh of the Word was born of an undefiled mother, God, the Word himself, is most Catholicly believed, most impiously denied, to have been born of the Virgin; which being the case, God forbid that any one should seek to defraud Holy Mary of her prerogative of divine grace and her special glory. For by the singular gift of him who is our Lord and God, and withal, her own son, she is to be confessed most truly and most blessedly—The mother of God Theotocos.”

St. Cyril of Alexandria, 4th and 5th centuries (Believed in)

St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Council of Ephesus*, Homily 6: “Who ever heard of an architect who built himself a temple, and yielded up the first possession of it to his great enemy?”

St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Homily 11*: “Hail, Mary Theotokos, Virgin-Mother, lightbearer, uncorrupt vessel... Hail Mary, you are the most precious creature in the whole world; hail, Mary, uncorrupt dove; hail, Mary, inextinguishable lamp; for from you was born the Sun of justice... Through you, every faithful soul achieves salvation.”²⁰

¹⁸ Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne, Tomus LVII (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1862)

¹⁹ 2; PG 65:717 C, 720 A.

²⁰ At the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus; PG 77:1032 C-D.

Jacob of Sarug, 5th and 6th centuries (Believed in)

Jacob of Sarug, *Homilies on the Nativity*: “The very fact that God has elected her proves that none was ever holier than Mary, if any stain had disfigured her soul, if any other virgin had been purer and holier, God would have selected her and rejected Mary.”

Romanos the Melodist, 5th to 6th centuries (Believed in)

Romanos of Melodist, *On the Birth of Mary*: “Then the tribes of Israel heard that Anna had conceived the immaculate one. So everyone took part in the rejoicing. Joachim gave a banquet, and great was the merriment in the garden. He invited the priests and Levites to prayer; then he called Mary into the center of the crowd, that she might be magnified.”

Pope St. Gregory the Great, 6th and 7th centuries (Believed in)

(See in this article [Believed in the Immaculate Conception](#), p. 12.)

St. Germanus of Constantinople, 7th and 8th centuries (Believed in)

St. Germanus of Constantinople, *Homily 1*, On the Presentation, 8th century: “Hail, Mary, full of grace, holier than the saints, higher than the heavens, more glorious than the cherubim, more honorable than the seraphim, more venerable and lofty than all creation.”²¹

To be more holy than the angels, Mary had to have never been stained with any sin.

St. Andrew of Crete, 7th and 8th centuries (May have believed in)

St. Andrew of Crete, *Homily 4*, On Mary’s Nativity, 8th century: “This is Mary, the *Theotókos* [Mother of God], the common refuge of all Christians, the first to be liberated from the original fall of our parents”²²

Apostate John Damascene, 7th to 8th centuries (Believed in)

Nominal *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Immaculate Conception: “John Damascene (“*Or. i Nativ. Deip.*” n. 2) esteems the supernatural influence of God at the generation of Mary to be so comprehensive that he extends it also to her parents. He says of them that, during the generation, they were filled and purified by the Holy Spirit, and freed from sexual concupiscence. Consequently according to the Damascene, even the human element of her origin, the material of which she was formed, was pure and holy.”²³ ... In the homilies on the Assumption, John explains that Mary, although not subject to death, died nonetheless. Death, of course, is the penalty for sin, and only one preserved even from Original Sin would be exempt.”

²¹ 17-18; Pg 98:308 A-C.

²² PG 97:880 C.

²³ On how this occurred, see my article [The Miracle of the Immaculate Conception](#).

Apostate John Damascene, *Homily on the Nativity*, 8th century: “O blessed loins of Joachim, whence the all-pure seed was poured out! O glorious womb of Anna, in which the most holy fetus grew and was formed, silently increasing! O womb in which was conceived the living heaven, wider than the wideness of the heavens... She is all beautiful, all near to God. For she, surpassing the cherubim, exalted beyond the seraphim, is placed near to God.”²⁴

Apostate Duns Scotus, 13th to 14th centuries (Believed in)

Nominal *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Immaculate Conception: “The famous Duns Scotus (d. 1308) at last (*in III Sent.*, dist. iii, in both commentaries) laid the foundations of the true doctrine [of the Immaculate Conception] so solidly and dispelled the objections in a manner so satisfactory, that from that time onward the doctrine prevailed... He removed the great difficulty of Thomas [Aquinas] showing that, so far from being excluded from redemption, the Blessed Virgin obtained of her Divine Son the greatest of redemptions through the mystery of her preservation from all sin.”

Richard Joseph Michael Ibranyi, 20th and 21st centuries, (Believes in)

I make my case for the Immaculate Conception and believe it is irrefutable on several grounds. But a pope is still needed to make it a dogma by infallibly defining it.

(See my article [Miracle of the Immaculate Conception](#).)

(See my book Mary, God’s Masterpiece and Lucifer’s Fall: [Mary Immaculate, Without Sin](#))

(Hopefully soon, I will incorporate all my works on the Immaculate Conception in one book titled *The Immaculate Conception*.)

Some Who Believed in the Immaculate Birth but Not the Immaculate Conception

Apostate Bernard of Clairvaux, 11th and 12th centuries

Apostate Bernard of Clairvaux, *Letter 174*: “Unquestionably, the Mother of the Lord was holy before she was born; nor is the holy Church in any way mistaken when she regards as holy the very day of her birth... I think, too, that an even more abundant blessing of grace was shed upon her not only to sanctify her in birth but also to keep her through life free of any sin... What further honor are we to suppose as warranted? The honor due her Conception, they say, which preceded her honorable birth! ...Therefore, the Lord Jesus alone was conceived of the Holy Spirit since he alone was holy both before and after conception. With his exception, the following humble and truthful confession of one man in his own regard has application to all who are born of Adam: ‘In iniquities was I conceived and in sins my mother brought me forth.’

²⁴ 2; PG 96, 664B and 9; PG 97, 676D.

“And yet what I have written has been said surely without prejudice to one of maturer wisdom. And this applies especially to the authority of the Roman Church. To her examination I reserve the whole matter just as I do other matters of this kind. If my understanding in any way differs from hers, I am prepared to correct my judgment.”²⁵

Apostate Thomas Aquinas, 13th century

Apostate Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 27, art. 2: “I answer that – The Blessed Virgin was sanctified after animation. ...Reply to Objection 2. 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 Saviour of all. ...The Blessed Virgin did indeed contract original sin, but was cleansed therefrom before her birth from the womb.”

Apostate Bonaventure, 13th century

Apostate Bonaventure: “Whether the soul of the Blessed Virgin had been sanctified before the contraction of original sin? It is therefore necessary to assert that the infection of original sin has existed before the sanctification... The sanctification of the Virgin took place after the contraction of original sin...”²⁶

“But if it is asked on what day or hour she was sanctified, this is not known; however, it is probably held that soon after the infusion of the soul, the infusion of grace was accomplished. But whatever may be said about the hour, it must be held for certain that she was sanctified before her birth.”²⁷

Apostate Antipopes Innocent III, Innocent V, John XXII, and Clement VI

(For the quotes, see in this article [Evidence from the Article “How Many Popes Does it Take to Deny the Immaculate Conception?”](#), p. 7.)

Some Who Believed Mary Was Freed from Original Sin during the Incarnation

To believe Mary was freed from original sin sometime after her birth is a heresy against the Ordinary Magisterium dogma which states the Mary was free from original sin in the womb and thus before her birth.

Apostate Peter Lombard, 11th to 12th centuries

Apostate Peter Lombard, *Book of Sentences*, 1150: “1. On the flesh which the Word took, what it was like before and when it was taken. Concerning the Word’s flesh [Mary’s flesh], it is also asked whether, before it was conceived, it was in bondage to sin, and whether it was so when it was taken by the Word.—It can surely be said and is necessary to believe, according to the agreement of the testimony of the

²⁵ *PL*, 182, 333 ff.

²⁶ III., dist. 3, a. 1, a. 1, q. 2, *Opera Omnia Tom III* Quarracchi 1884.

²⁷ Quaestio 3, Conclusio.

saints, that 'it was first subject to sin,' like the rest of the Virgin's flesh, but it was so cleansed by the work of the Holy Spirit that, immune from all contagion of sin, it might be united to the Word... 2. That not only that flesh, but also the holy Virgin, was cleansed from all contagion of sin by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, by descending upon her, entirely purified Mary too from sin and also freed her from the urge to sin... After the assent of the holy Virgin [during the Incarnation], the Holy Spirit descended upon her, according to the word of the Lord which the angel had spoken, purified her and prepared both the power to receive and the power to beget the Word of the divinity... 4. From these words, what we said earlier is made very clear, namely that the flesh of the Word was conceived and taken at the same time, and that the same flesh, indeed the whole Virgin, with the coming of the Holy Spirit, was made chaste from all shame of sin."²⁸

Notice how the apostate Lombard he lies when he says all the saints hold this heresy. The complete opposite is true. This is one of the evil traits of the scholastics. They lie! They lie about translations; they lie about interpretations; they lie by ignoring evidence; they lie by attributing quotes to Church fathers that do not exist; and, they lie about sources.²⁹

Evidence from Apostate Antipopes Allowing and then Favoring the Immaculate Conception

Apostate Antipopes allowed both positions to be held, for or against the Immaculate Conception

One proof that the Immaculate Conception was not a dogma in the 15th century is as follows. Even though Sixtus IV was an apostate antipope, he teaches the truth that the opinion of the Immaculate Conception was not yet a dogma and thus it can be opposed or held without being a heretic. He warns both sides not to accuse each other of teaching heresy or of being heretics until a future decision from the Apostolic See (a future infallible papal decree):

Apostate Antipope Sixtus IV, *Grave nimis*, 1483: "Some preachers of different orders... in their sermons to the people in public... have not been ashamed to affirm... that all those who hold or assert that the same glorious and immaculate mother of God, was conceived without the stain of original sin, sin mortally, or that they are heretical... We reprove and condemn assertions of this kind as false and erroneous and far removed from the truth... But these also we reprehend who have dared to assert that those holding the contrary opinion, namely, that the glorious Virgin Mary was conceived with original sin are guilty of the crime of heresy and of mortal sin, since up to this time there has been no decision made by the Roman Church and the Apostolic See."³⁰

Even though the Council of Trent is null and void, it teaches the truth that the Immaculate Conception has not yet been infallibly defined or infallibly condemned. Hence it left open the possibility that Mary was conceived without sin:

Heretical and Invalid *Council of Trent*, Sess. V, June 17, 1546, On Original Sin: "[D. 789] 2. If any one asserts that the prevarication of Adam injured himself alone and not his posterity; and that the holiness and justice received of God which he

²⁸ Book 3, Distinction 3. Chapter 1.

²⁹ See my book [The Hellenization of Christianity by the Anti-Church Fathers and Scholastics](#).

³⁰ D. 735.

lost, he lost for himself alone and not for us also; or that he, being defiled by the sin of disobedience has only transfused death and pains of the body into the whole human race, but not sin also, which is the death of the soul; let him be anathema:— whereas he contradicts the apostle who says: By one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned. (Rom. 5:12)

“[D. 792] 6. This same holy Synod doth nevertheless declare that it is not its intention to include in this decree, where original sin is treated of, the blessed and immaculate Virgin Mary, the mother of God; but that the constitutions of Pope Sixtus IV, of happy memory, are to be observed, under the pains contained in the said constitutions, which it renews.”

From 1617 all the apostate antipopes favored the Immaculate Conception

Nominal Catholic Encyclopedia, The Immaculate Conception, The Controversy: “Paul V (1617) decreed that no one should dare to teach publicly that Mary was conceived in original sin.... In 1622 Gregory V abolished the term ‘sanctificatio’. Paul V (1617) decreed that no one should dare to teach publicly that Mary was conceived in original sin, and Gregory V (1622) imposed absolute silence (*in scriptis et sermonibus etiam privatis*) upon the adversaries of the doctrine until the Holy See should define the question.”

It needs to be mentioned that the silencing of those who denied the Immaculate was an illegal act, not only because they were apostate antipopes, but even if they were popes. Why? -Because a pope does not have the right to silence an allowable opinion. If he did, he would not be guilty of heresy, but he would be guilty for making a sinful disciplinary law. Hence such a law is null and void. For the sake of the argument, we will assume these apostate antipopes were true popes.³¹ If they were certain that the Immaculate Conception is true, all they had to do was infallibly define it and thus make a dogma. Because they did not do that, they admit that they are not certain and thus have no right to silence those who deny the Immaculate Conception, as it would be an allowable opinion until a pope eventually infallibly condemns it.³²

I end this article by saying, “Any number of popes, as well as Church Fathers and other Catholic theologians, can deny or believe in the Immaculate Conception because it has not been infallibly defined or infallibly condemned.”

For the glory of God; in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael, St. Joseph, Ss. Joachim and Anne, St. John the Baptist, the other angels and saints; and for the salvation of men

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³¹ They were putative popes for those who were inculpably ignorant of the fact that they were not true popes, which is the case with most laymen and non-theologian bishops and priests.

³² See my *Catechism Excerpt 1: On Revelation, Infallibility, Dogmas, Heresy, and Schism*: [Invalid and heretical censures](#). And see my book *The Great Apostasy*: Some sinful or harmful laws and decrees of the Great Apostasy: [Point 1](#) and its footnote.