

Letter of John McHugh (Ushaw College, Durham England) to Paul Ford 5/20/76

As for the Immaculate Conception, I should argue thus:

(1) There cannot be a doctrine of the Immaculate Conception before St. Augustine, because it was he who coined the technical term “original sin.”

(2) Before that, all one could find would be testimonies that Mary was totally sinless (which of course would include the Immaculate Conception, in an era when sin had not been distinguished into *actuale et originale* [actual sin and original sin]).

(3) The phrase *homo lapsus* [fallen man] too is really the common currency of Augustine and the Scholastics. Before Augustine this notion is expressed by speaking of *fili Adam* [sons of Adam]; i.e. *filius Adam* [son of Adam] = *homo lapsus* [fallen man].

(4) Thus Christ by reason of the virginal conception is not *filius Adam* [son of Adam] in the usual sense, but is the direct creation of God, and hence sinless.

(5) Yet Irenaeus speaks of Mary as the new Eve. Why? The first Eve was the one person other than Adam who did not have original sin: for her it was *peccatum actuale* [actual sin]. But also, she alone was not *filia Adam* [daughter of Adam]. So in speaking of Mary as the new Eve, Irenaeus is saying that she was the one person who was not *insofar as sin is concerned* “a daughter of Eve/Adam.”

(6) Irenaeus sees this as Mary’s role.

(7) With this we can base the doctrine on a full understanding of *cecharitomeme* [highly favored], where the Vulgate is terribly right in rendering *gratia plena* [full of grace].

Along those lines, then . . . though I have not written on the point. I don’t think there is anything very satisfactory in print . . . yet . . . !!!