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William H. Marshner

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A CRITIQUE OF MARIAN COUNTERFACTUAL FORMULAE: A REPORT OF RESULTS

This paper is devoted to refuting the so-called *debitum hypotheticum* or *conditionatum*. In general, a *debitum* is expressed by the claim that Mary, thanks to her connexion with Adam, was under a necessity to contract original sin; the *debitum conditionatum* is expressed by the claim that, thanks to the same necessity, she *would* have contracted original sin, if one or another condition had been fulfilled (e.g., if God had not preserved her).¹

Thus the distinguishing characteristic of the *debitum conditionatum* is the need to use a contrary-to-fact condition (or as it is nowadays called, a counterfactual) in order to express it. Hence a promising way to refute this sort of *debitum* is to make a critique of counterfactual conditional formulae in which Mary's name appears; thus the title of the present paper.

The time is ripe for such a critique, because over the last twenty years logicians and philosophers of science have produced an important body of literature, and reached a substantial consensus, on the meaning and truth-conditions for counterfactuals.² Almost nothing of this work was available in 1954,

¹ Robert Grosseteste was apparently the first to make the conditional claim, whose other defenders include John Duns Scotus, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrangé (as of 1954), and Canon René Laurentin; for the citations, see J. B. Carol, O.F.M., *A History of the Controversy over the "Debitum Peccati"* (The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, N.Y., 1977). Besides the authors who were prepared to defend *only* the conditional claim, however, there have been hundreds of others who held it automatically, as an entailment of the stronger, unconditional *debitum*, proximate or remote.

² A complete statement of the problem and abundant bibliography will be found in David K. Lewis, *Counterfactuals* (Harvard Univ. Press, Cam-

when the *debitum* problem was solemnly debated at Rome and enjoyed a brief vogue.³ The fact that theologians have had more fundamental questions to face since the Council is at least one reason why the recent formal-logical achievements have never been applied to the Marian *debitum*, which many theologians have considered an arcane (not to say trivial) matter in any case. There is also another reason.

The recent work in formal logic is rather technical; it cannot be read without a certain amount of background in standard symbolic logic, model theory (or formal semantics), and metamathematics. Unlike their medieval predecessors, today's theologians have failed to keep abreast of the formal logic of their own time, much less the semantics and related philosophical disciplines. The result is a pity and a headache. It is a pity, because the predominantly hermeneutical concerns of post-Conciliar theology need the tools of semiology.⁴ It is a headache, because the theologian who does wish to exploit the new resources is often unintelligible to his colleagues, and few theological journals are equipped to print the standard symbolic notations, which are taken for granted in the better philosophical journals, and without which it is often impossible to proceed rigorously.⁵

bridge, 1973); Robert C. Stalnaker, *A Theory of Conditionals* in Nicholas Rescher, ed., *Studies in Logical Theory* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1968); Robert C. Stalnaker and Richmond Thomason, *A Semantical Analysis of Conditional Logic* in *Theoria* 36 (1970) 24-42; for a differently based and less complete, but in some ways more accessible, approach see Howard C. Wasserman, *An Analysis of the Counterfactual Conditional* in the *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic* 17 (1976) 395-400.

³ The proceedings of the Roman debate are in *Vgl* 11, which appeared in 1957.

⁴ Cf. the conclusion of the present writer's article, *Criteria for Doctrinal Development in the Marian Dogmas: An Essay in Meta-theology* in *MS* 28 (1977) 47-97.

⁵ The present paper, or rather what would have been the present paper, is a case in point. The author prepared and announced for publication (cf. *MS* 29 [1978] 135, 187) a fully-argued critique of the Marian counterfactuals. It was couched in what the author hoped was a com-

Now, before one launches upon the topic at hand, a word or two of defense seems in order. Isn't the *debitum peccati*, one may ask, a curiosity of pre-Conciliar theology? Is it not eccentric to be discussing the thing today at all, much less mastering the machinery of mathematical logic, to no better purpose?

I should respond, first, that the *debitum* is worth talking about because it is an answer, albeit a flawed one, to two questions of abiding importance. The questions are: what is the place of Mary in theological anthropology? And, in particular, how does the mystery of the Immaculate Conception illuminate, or qualify, an adequate theology of original sin? It is no great exaggeration to say that the *implicit* answers to these questions in the more familiar manuals are, respectively, "none to speak of" and "not at all." The tracts on man and grace proceed without a mention of the woman who was *gratia plena*. The tract on original sin thrashes out the causes why we have it—and scarcely notices that the same alleged causes in Mary didn't produce it. One has to read the *Mariologia* before discovering that maculism isn't true!

Has the situation improved since the Council? There are influential quarters in which it has not. One would be hard pressed to name works more widely respected, or more typical of what is best in post-Conciliar developments, than those of Maurizio Flick and Zoltán Alszeghy. But take in hand their *Fondamenti di una antropologia teologica* and the later vol-

promise idiom: formalization was kept to a minimum for the sake of theological readers and yet not altogether excluded, so that an interested logician could at least see with fair accuracy what the critique amounted to from the perspective of his own discipline. Alas, having examined the manuscript, the editor of *Marian Studies* informed the author that the projected article (a) would not be understandable and (b) would cost the journal an exorbitant sum to print. Gradually brought round to acknowledge the soundness of the editor's judgment, the author agreed to see what could be done within the format of a smaller piece, reporting rather than presenting the critique, and restricting itself to plain English. Hence, after many false starts, the present paper and its subtitle.

ume, *Il peccato originale*. One will look in vain for a chapter, a page reference, or even a footnote on the un-Adamic daughter of Adam, type of the new humanity.

There is no mystery about what lies behind these preposterous omissions. It is the deeply ingrained habit of thinking that the Immaculate Conception is a fundamentally uninteresting "exception" to an otherwise profound theological pattern. One invokes God's transcendent freedom and the radical unpredictability of grace in order to make of the Immaculate Conception nothing more than a delightful surprise. *In effect* one holds that maculism is *sound* theory graciously belied by fact—mitigated, almost, rather than disconfirmed.

Now the *debitum peccati* is just exactly this ingrained prejudice, poured into a technical vocabulary and presented as a distinct bit of theology. (Of course, for the Thomists after Cajetan it was also something more; it was a labor-saving device which, when attached to the Immaculate Conception, guaranteed that Aquinas's treatise on original sin could stand without amendment.) If one objects that *as* a distinct bit of theology the *debitum* is *recherché* and something of a fossil, one is largely correct; yet the thing is worth discussing, I am arguing, precisely because in the *debitum* the prejudice is out in the open. Where the *debitum* is being asserted, the questions of Mary's place in theological anthropology and of how the Immaculate Conception impacts on the theology of original sin are at least being answered. In a matter where the coherence of theology is at stake, a bad answer is better than none, because it opens the way to debate. Such is my first response in defense of the topic.

I have a second. If, as a distinct bit of theology, the *debitum* is a fossil, nevertheless, as a deep prejudice articulated but not exhausted in that bit of theology, the *debitum* is a ghost and a dangerous one. As ingrained prejudice, the *debitum* is the ghost of maculism. It continues to haunt theology wherever theories of original sin are professionally elaborated without

so much as a glance at the Marian counter-example.

Listen to the thesis of Flick-Alszeghy on the transmission of original sin (my translation).

In this conception, the originating original sin consists in the non-correspondence, on humanity's part, to its vocation of being the mediator of salvation. Thereby, every individual who enters by birth to become part of this humanity finds himself in a situation of "dis-grace" both in an ontic sense (lack of sanctifying grace and of the theological virtues) and in a personal sense (incapacity to opt for God).⁶

In this passage, 'humanity' does not refer to human nature precisely abstracted but to the race itself as a bio-historical community. The old infected flesh has been replaced by an infected "situation," which is mankind's historical condition. "Everyone" born into this community in its present condition "finds himself" in original sin, because the humanity which now exists both inside him and around him fails to mediate salvation to him. Now, shall we reason a little? We have a major premise about everyone. As a minor, it is incontrovertible that Mary entered by birth into the common humanity, which fails of itself to mediate salvation. If the theory is correct, she ought to have contracted original sin. The theory would not be asserted if it were not thought correct. Ergo the *debitum*. And why be surprised? The *debitum*-prejudice is already contained in the structure of the theory. Like a ghost waiting for a second chance at flesh, the *debitum* is in the theory like a mistake waiting to be committed again.

⁶ M. Flick and Z. Alszeghy, *Il peccato originale* (Brescia: Editrice Queriniana, 1972) 323. The passage is admittedly not as clear as one would like. The authors do not say, in as many words, that entrance by normal generation into the human race as we find it in history is the sufficient condition for the contraction of original sin. But this latter is certainly the most natural construal, and I have been unable to find a passage that is clearer or that serves to cast doubt on such a construal. A great deal of contemporary theological writing seems almost to shrink from clarity, but a full airing of that complaint would take us far afield.

So, my second response is that the *debitum*, while dead in the sense of being "out of print" as an explicit theory, is still influential as a prejudice. In fact, its effects have grown worse since the Council. Interest in Marian theology has declined visibly among academic theologians. Every Marian truth other than the divine maternity (and perhaps the virginal conception) has been thrust to the bottom of some "hierarchy" of importance. Theologians of national stature have declared the Immaculate Conception "obscure and remote from the heart of the Christian faith." It is not uncommon to attribute these deplorable tendencies to an honourable cause: to *Lumen gentium*, or to a change in devotional taste, or to a new theological agenda prompted by ecumenism. But their real cause, I think, is that same prejudice which for centuries has isolated certain Marian dogmas as remote and irrelevant to the heart of Catholic theology. Hence it is reasonably clear that a renewal of Marian theology (as distinct from Marian devotion) is virtually impossible until every articulated form of that prejudice (i.e. every form of the *debitum*) has been confronted and refuted. Those who think that a vigorous renewal of Marian theology is desirable will therefore grasp the justification of the present topic.

'*Debitum*,' like the Latin modal verb from which it derives, is ambiguous. In a first usage, it indicates an obligation of the civil order, as in debts and contracts. By an easy extension, it is used to indicate an obligation of the juridical order, dealing with what is enjoined by statute (whether or not the statute is enforced in a particular case). Thirdly, by another easy extension, '*debitum*' is used to indicate a moral obligation, attaching to what is enjoined by conscience, by the Natural Law or by divine justice. Native to the Biblical perspective is a combination of the first and third of these ideas into the notion of "covenant" obligation. It will be convenient to group all of these usages together under the label of juridico-deontic *debitum*.

Then, thanks in part to the confused thinking which treats regularities of nature as though they were God-given statutes, '*debitum*' acquires another usage, in which it bespeaks physical compulsion or causal necessity. In this usage, a thing "has to" happen (*debet accidere*) just in case a condition sufficient for that thing is fulfilled. This usage we shall label the nomological *debitum*.⁷

Lastly, there is an important doxastic usage. A thing "ought to be" the case if it follows logically from one of our beliefs. For example, believing traffic conditions to be as usual on the highway, we say that John ought to be home by 6 o'clock. At 7:30, with still no John, we say in the light of the same belief that John ought to have been home over an hour ago (*debut*). This 'ought to have been' expresses falsification of a *consequence* of a belief (and hence falsification of the belief itself, which is why, in the example cited, we begin to worry that there may have been a traffic accident). This usage, which is overlooked in the Mariological literature, we shall label the doxastic *debitum*.

About these three sorts of *debitum*, in regard to their applicability to Mary, I have established in a previous article the following conclusions.⁸

⁷ By distinguishing the juridical usage of 'law' (statute) from the nomological usage (a "law" of nature), I do not intend to insinuate any grand philosophical theses. I simply take seriously the following obvious differences. A law in the nomological sense is a formula which describes an order-in-the-real, enters into the texts of *explanatory* theories, and serves to *predict* the behavior of the real either deterministically or statistically. A law in the juridical sense is nothing of the kind: it does not describe, it does not enter into a body of theory, and it does not serve to predict. It is a directive or prescription addressed to public, free obedience, to which a sanction or penalty is attached. The careful drawing and maintaining of this distinction does not presume an atheistical view of nature, nor does it preclude the possibility of an oddly intermediate sort of law (perhaps the Natural Law) which partakes of both sides.

⁸ W. H. Marshner, *A Logician's Reflexions on the Debitum Contrabendi Peccatum*, in *MS* 29 (1978) 134-187.

(1) A juridico-deontic *debitum contrahendi peccatum* makes no sense whatever. The transmission of original sin is not a matter of statute; for, even if there are "laws" involved, they are certainly not the sort of laws which can be disobeyed; nor can it be said that a "law of God" enjoins the contraction of sin.⁹

(2) A nomological *debitum peccati* is at least of the right kind. The regularities by which original sin is transmitted are analogous to laws of nature in formal respects (see above, note 7). Nevertheless, a nomological *debitum peccati* which is unconditional (that is, one which is supposed to express a necessitation in the actual world), such as the traditional "Thomistic" *debitum proximum*, is flatly impossible because self-contradictory. If one claims that every naturally begotten descendant of sinful Adam necessarily contracts original sin, one is saying that such descent is a sufficient condition for the contraction. If one adds that Mary was under this necessity, one perforce says that in Mary's case in the actual world a sufficient condition obtained for her contraction. If one then confesses the Immaculate Conception, one contradicts oneself. It is contradictory to say that a *sufficient* condition obtained and that the consequent did not obtain. It is preposterous to allege that what did *not* happen was nevertheless necessitated.¹⁰

⁹ *Ibid.*, sections 1.4.1-9. In rejecting juridical accounts of original sin, such as one finds in exemptionists like Montalbanus as well as in debitists like Petrus Aureolus, contemporary theologians are virtually unanimous in any case. One might suppose that a revival of the Biblical theology of covenant would be helpful; after all, divine threats of historical disasters are often part of the covenant as a sanction, so that once the covenant is broken by man, the occurrence of these disasters can be said to be "enjoined" by God in some sense. However, these disasters are always of the external economy of Providence (sufferings in the outward conditions of life, intended to inspire detachment and repentance) never of the internal economy (distribution of interior graces). Hence, in the package which we call "original sin," the element which resists the analogy of covenant sanction is the key element of all, the privation of sanctifying grace.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, sections 1.5.0-1.9.10. Logically speaking, the claim that a suf-

(3) The doxastic *debitum*, which posits nothing in the real and simply expresses the falsification of a belief through the falsification of one of the belief's entailments, exactly fits the Mariological case. It explains why it *does* seem natural to say that Mary "ought to have" contracted original sin. In the absence of a counter-example, the belief that every natural descendent of sinful Adam contracts original sin seems to be perfectly sound. In the light of that belief, Mary's contraction was something to be expected. When in the course of theological events it was finally admitted that her contraction had not happened, that belief (otherwise apparently well-founded) was falsified; but the theologians who considered that belief to be the *exact and adequate* expression of a revealed datum refused to admit the falsification; hence they fell into the incoherence already noted.¹¹

(4) Nevertheless there is a coherent version of the *debitum* which is not doxastic but nomological. It consists of two parts: (a) one recognizes that a sufficient condition for the contraction of original sin did not obtain in Mary's case in the actual world (hence she was neither obligated nor necessitated in fact); but (b) one asserts that her case is sufficiently like the rest of ours to justify this inference: if the relevant conditions which obtain at our conceptions and which are sufficient for

sufficient condition for original sin existed in Mary's case in the actual world is the *primary* feature of the *debitum proximum*. The quasi-hylomorphic account of why natural descent is such a sufficient condition, with its *caro infecta*, is logically secondary, even though historically it has been the most prominent feature of this "Thomistic" theory. Therefore the incoherence of such a *debitum* remains even when the "infected flesh" is replaced by something more plausible, such as a sinful "situation," in the style of several post-Conciliar theologies.

The *debitum remotum*, by the way (lest I seem to have overlooked that protean solution), is at bottom nothing but the claim that Mary fulfilled one or more necessary conditions for the sin's contraction. Logically, such a claim establishes nothing about any sort of obligation or necessitation; cf. *ibid.*, sections 1.6.0ff.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, sections 1.6.2-7.

our contraction of sin had obtained at her conception, they would have been sufficient in her case also and hence she would have contracted original sin. This in a nutshell is the *debitum conditionatum*. One claims that it is possible to specify a condition under which it is *true* to say that Mary would have contracted original sin. And because the condition-to-be-specified admittedly did not obtain in the actual world, the need for counterfactual phraseology is evident.

It is often supposed that an assertion of this kind, involving an unfulfilled (and never-to-be-fulfilled) condition, is so "iffey" as to provide even a zealous Immaculist with no motive to refute it. Such complacency is mistaken; it rests upon the assumption that counterfactuals are *about* unrealities, or that they don't assert anything to *be* true, merely that something *would be* true. On the contrary, it is evident that counterfactuals do assert something to be true because we often reject them as false. For instance,

(1) *If people didn't smoke, there wouldn't be any forest fires*

is clearly false. Something in the structure of the actual world makes it false (lightning, among other things). Similarly, if you accept

(2) *If it weren't raining tonight, I would go to the opera* as true, you accept something about my *actual* preferences and intentions. The same is true in theology. To take a slightly absurd example, if we were so ill-advised as to accept

(3) *If her mother had not been a saint, Mary would have contracted original sin,*

we should be committing ourselves to a very odd theory of how original sin is actually transmitted and of where Mary's case fits in the actual scheme of things.¹² One may select a more

¹² Gregory Palamas seems to have maintained that original sin could be had by degrees, and that God therefore chose for Mary's ancestors a line of increasingly just persons, so that the stain might be extinct in her line by the time the Mother of God came to be conceived; see K. Soph-

plausible protasis, of course; but whatever protasis one selects, one is committing oneself to some theory. This is why the *debitum conditionatum* deserves to be taken seriously as an answer to the question about Mary's place in theological anthropology. I shall argue that it is a false answer, however.

Notice that, although the counterfactual conveys, if true, something about the actual world, it does so in a roundabout way. It posits an alternative course of events or alternative "possible world" in which its protasis is true. How is this alternative world related to the actual world? It is related by what we may call *minimal alteration*. Look again at

(2) *If it weren't raining tonight, I would go to the opera.*

This does *not* assert that whenever it fails to rain at night I go to the opera, only tonight it is raining. *Nor* does it assert that, if *only* it weren't raining, I would go to the opera tonight no matter what else might be the case. (After all, what if there were a calamity?) No, it merely asserts that, absent the rain, *but all other currently true conditions remaining as much as possible the same*, I would go to the opera. Thus the counterfactual posits a minimal alteration. Of course, one can usually think of a number of ways in which this minimal alteration might be conceived, so that the counterfactual protasis posits, in a typical case, a whole family of possible worlds; but however many they may be, all those "worlds" agree in this: they differ from the actual world "just enough" and "only enough" to make the protasis true. Let us give such minimally altered possible worlds a convenient name. Relative to each counterfactual protasis, let us call them the protasis-worlds. For example, in

(1) *If people didn't smoke, there wouldn't be any forest fires,*

the protasis-worlds are all those possible worlds which differ from the actual world just enough to make it true that no one

okles, *Tou en hagiois patros hemon Gregorion tou Palama homiliai kb'* (Athens: 1861) col. 945.

smokes. Now, why is that proposition false? It is false because in such worlds there is a lot of carry-over from the actual world. Many facts and many principles *remain* true. In this case, it remains true in the protasis-worlds that lightning sometimes causes forest fires, and hence it fails to *become* true in those worlds that there are no forest fires. By contrast,

(4) *If people didn't smoke, there wouldn't be any tobacco shops*

is true, because in the same protasis-worlds it *remains* true that shops exist to supply a demand, and hence it *becomes* true in those worlds that tobacco stores don't exist.

It is now easy to see why counterfactuals, by talking about possible worlds, reveal the deep structure of the actual world; they do so by means of the carry-over fact or principle, which remains true because the protasis worlds are minimal alterations. It is also easy to see what is required for a counterfactual to be true. The generalized example, 'if *P* were the case, *Q* would be the case,' is true if and only if *Q* is true in every protasis-world, where *P* is the protasis.¹³

There follows an important rule about truth in counterfactuals. The indicative formulae which we can disengage (de-subjunctivize) from protasis and apodosis respectively have to be able to be true *together* in the protasis-worlds. As logicians say, they must be "jointly satisfiable"; otherwise the counterfactual cannot be true. The hope of a sentimental killer,

(5) *Grandma would be happier if she didn't exist,*

is preposterous, because, given the carry-over principle that

¹³ Similarly, there is a weaker counterfactual which is expressed in terms of 'might' rather than 'would.'; e.g., 'if it weren't raining tonight, I might go to the opera.' This weaker counterfactual is true, if and only if 'I go to the opera' is true in *at least one* protasis-world. The 'might' counterfactual has been used sometimes in theology to express the so-called *potentia naturalis peccandi*; it does not amount to a *debitum* of any kind. For a modern example, see Cándido Pozo, S.J., *El Credo del Pueblo de Dios: Comentario Teológico*, 2nd. ed., (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1975) 136.

one must exist in order to be happy, the statements 'Grandma is happier' and 'Grandma does not exist' are not jointly satisfiable for the same grandmother.

We may now turn to face a more difficult problem. The talk of possible worlds, and of statements' being true in possible worlds, is easy so long as one deals in common nouns. But what happens when one speaks of particular persons, that is, when one tries to project the bearers of proper names into possible worlds? It is easy to see that there is a difficulty: in the actual world, a woman is a prime substance with definite accidents, and we can pick her out of a crowd, if worse comes to worse, by pointing to her; in possible worlds, a woman is an *ens rationis* to which we can ascribe any possible accident, so that her identity becomes problematical.¹⁴

¹⁴ The same is true in time. Before he or she exists, an actual person is a possible person—an *ens rationis*, not an "individualized essence" and not a spot of *caro informis, infecta* or otherwise.

Here is another powerful psychological basis, rooted in the imagination, for the *debitum's* plausibility. One imagines God, a moment prior to Our Lady's conception, thinking thoughts like these: "Mary is about to be conceived; if I don't intervene by applying to her immediately the merits of My Son, this person will contract original sin. My will is the contrary; therefore, I shall cause her to be conceived in grace, but I shall know her as about-to-be-sinful-apart-from-my-act and hence as having what several future theologians will call the *debitum peccati*."

Such a train of thought is absurd, even apart from the anthropomorphism.

First, it assumes that Mary was about to exist anyway, thanks to natural causes operating independently of her predestination. As we shall see, such an assumption cannot be made lightly in the unique case of the Mother of God.

Secondly (and more to the point of the present concern), such a train of thought, once combined with the extractive sense of 'redemption' so as to establish a *debitum*, blurs to the vanishing point the distinction between the possible and the existent. The existent Mary is a substance having individuating accidents and able to have others, having real potencies and exigencies. The possible Mary is nothing of the kind, being an *ens rationis*. At any moment prior to her actual conception, no matter how close to that event the moment may be, 'Mary' therefore names an *ens rationis* and not a person. Now it is perfectly clear that an *ens rationis*

To see what form this difficulty takes in counterfactual contexts, it is helpful to remind ourselves of why we bother to make up counterfactual claims about individuals in the first place. What do we gain by asserting or accepting

(6) *If Joseph hadn't been granted a vision, he would have ended the engagement quietly*

as true? It seems to me that we gain information about the actual Joseph. He was shocked to learn of Mary's pregnancy;

cannot contract original sin *in actu exercito* and cannot be in any "danger" of doing so. But if such an *ens* cannot contract original sin, neither can it be, in terms of real potencies and necessities, "about to contract" it. For no agent is reasonably said to be about to do what it cannot do. Therefore the future-tense sentence, 'Mary will contract original sin,' understood in the sense of potency and act, is utter nonsense. It is not a meaningful proposition about to be falsified by the event; it is a category mistake. For that which the subject ('Mary') denotes at the moment of utterance cannot be composed with the predicate alleged. Nevertheless, the imagination, notoriously a poor guide in metaphysics, tricks one into thinking of an already individualized essence waiting for the last touch of being. One thinks of that last touch as transferring an already constituted individual from potentiality to actuality. Thus the alleged dangers, subjections and captivities of the possible Mary can become the *debitum peccati* of the actual Mary, as though the possible and the actual Marias were merely two "states" of the same person! In reality, of course, there simply is no "one" thing which both of them are. Hence it is preposterous to allege that the possible Mary contracts a "debt" which the actual Mary retains because the two are somehow the same thing.

These reflexions expose, I suspect, the real function of the *caro infecta*-plus-mediate-animation for Thomist debitists who have understood well the Common Doctor's teaching on the absolute priority of existence over essence. Forbidden by that teaching from positing an already-constituted essence as the possible Mary, they allowed some pre-animated matter, peccaminously infected, to be the possible Mary. Its predictable causality *qua* infected could then become *her* proximate *debitum* (cf. Cajetan, *De Conceptione B. Mariae Virginis ad Leonem X Pontificem Maximum in Opuscula Omni, Lyon, 1587, 139*). But this expedient would face a crippling difficulty even if one were to accept the idea of *caro infecta*. It is this: if the human person has both a body and a soul, so that the person does not exist until the human soul actually animates this matter, producing *hic homo*, how can the pre-animated fetus be identified in any way with the person? How can its infections, real or imaginary, constitute a *debitum* in the person who doesn't even exist yet? Granted, the

he was disposed to repudiate her; he did not wish to subject her to public humiliation. We gain all of this information at one stroke by allowing the-possible-Joseph-who-didn't-get-a-vision to stand as a counterpart to (or trans-world identity of) the actual Joseph who did. By then thinking what is true of the counterpart (he ended the engagement quietly), we grasp something about Joseph.

If this account is roughly correct, what we demand of our counterfactuals-about-individuals is *relevance* to those individuals and *informativeness* about them. How do we secure these demands? Well, the informativeness is easy; we secure it by requiring that the counterfactual not be tautological or

pre-activated matter can persist through a substantial change, acquire an *esse* impossible with its present *esse*, and so become the body of this person; but the same can be said of any food-stuff. Shall we commit the absurdity of saying that, theoretically, a person not already tainted by original sin could acquire that sin by eating the flesh of a person who had it, even if the cannibalism were not itself sinful? If one refuses to accept such nonsense, how *does* one explain the alleged effect of the pre-activated *caro infecta* on the person who simply makes that matter his own by substantial change?

However, there is another way of talking about possible persons and their contraction of original sin which avoids these gross mistakes. I can say, with some assurance, for example, that if I have a third son, he will contract original sin. I make no assertion this time about a substance and its accidents, nor about potency and act. I am affirming nothing but a logical connexion between a definite description ('my third son' and the predicate, 'foreseen by God in solidarity with Adam,' which in turn (I believe) entails 'contracts original sin' *in actu signato*. All of the more sophisticated accounts of Mary's alleged *debitum* proceed in this way. They posit an entailment between the indefinite description, 'a daughter of Adam' and the predicate 'contracts original sin.' I have argued already that this entailment cannot hold, because Mary falsifies it. Nevertheless, defenders of the *debitum* in this more sophisticated sense are fully justified when they say that the *debitum*, as they understand it, detracts not one whit from the perfect sanctity of the actual Mary (cf. the remarks of Joseph A. de Aldama, S.J., in *Vgl* 11, 476). The present writer is not arguing against the *debitum* because it diminishes or casts a shadow over Mary's sanctity (it doesn't) but because it misrepresents her place in theological anthropology.

analytic.¹⁵ Relevance is more difficult; we secure it by re-

¹⁵ Tautological and analytic counterfactuals have to be excluded because, despite the fact that the names of individuals may occur in them, they do not in fact reveal anything about anybody. For instance,

(7) *If Mary had contracted original sin, she would have contracted original sin*

is not falsifiable, but it proves nothing about Mary. Similarly,

(8) *If the square root of two had been even, it would have been divisible by two*

reveals nothing, you must admit, about the "nature" of the square root of two.

A well-known Marian counterfactual which fails to establish the *debitum* by reason of being tautologous is Roschini's proposition:

(9) *If Mary had been subjected to the law of original sin's transmission, she would have contracted original sin.*

(Cf. G. Roschini, *Mariologia*, 2nd. ed. [Rome, 1948], II, 89, note 1.) Well, it pertains to the definition of a law that whatever a law predicts happens to anything subject to the law (that is, to anything which fulfills the initial or boundary conditions of the law). Otherwise, the "law" is not a law. Therefore, to say that, if *x* were subject to a law, what the law predicts would happen to *x*, is tantamount to saying that the law is a law. Hence Roschini's proposition is a veiled tautology. That it sheds no light on the *debitum* problem is obvious from the fact that it cannot become false, no matter what name (try 'St. Michael' or 'Balaam's Ass') is substituted for 'Mary.'

A similar problem renders uninformative the following:

(10) *If God had so willed it, Mary would have contracted original sin.*

It is axiomatic in theology that whatever God wills either absolutely or under a fulfilled condition, happens. And vice-versa, whatever happens has been willed by God either absolutely or under a fulfilled condition. Therefore (10) cannot be falsified, simply because it is metaphysically impossible that something willed by God efficaciously and consequently should fail to happen. That (10) sheds no light on the *debitum* is clear from the fact that it will not become false, no matter what is substituted for Mary's contraction of sin as the *volitum*. Even an impossible volition, e.g., if God had willed that the square root of two be a rational number,

quiring that the possible individuals who exist in the protasis-worlds be genuine counterparts of the actual individuals in whom we are interested. The problem, then, is this: when is a possible person the counterpart of an actual person? What requirements must the possible person meet in order to *be* the counterpart (or trans-world self) of someone actual?

The answer, stated as non-technically as possible, has to go something like this: one or more definite descriptions¹⁶ of which the actual person is the referent in the actual world, must carry over into the protasis-worlds and must have the possible person as their referent in those worlds, if they have any referent at all.¹⁷ But just *which* definite descriptions we shall choose to carry over will vary from case to case.

For example, suppose that the individual in whom we are interested is President Carter, and suppose that what we wish to think about is what Carter would have done, if the Russians had attacked China last year. In that case, we shall want the definite description, 'the President of the U.S.,' to carry over for Carter into the protasis worlds; that is, we shall require that the counterpart to Jimmy Carter be the President of the U.S. in every protasis-world in which it is true that the Russians

does not falsify (10); for it is a rule of counterfactual logic that whenever the protasis is impossible, the counterfactual is trivially true. This is so because, if the protasis is impossible, it posits an "absurd world," and in an absurd world anything goes. Hence it is trivially true that if wishes were horses, this beggar would ride.

¹⁶ The term 'definite description' is a technical one; it means a descriptive phrase which can describe at most one object. In English, such phrases usually begin with the definite article. Examples are 'the author of the *Eroica*,' 'the father of Socrates,' 'the only surviving copy of Filmer's *Patriarcha*,' or, in general, 'the so-and-so.' In Mariology, one relies heavily on such definite descriptions as 'the Mother of God,' 'the daughter of Joachim and Anne,' 'the person predestined to the Immaculate Conception,' etc.

¹⁷ If the descriptions have no referent in a given possible world, we shall say that the actual person has no counterpart in that world (would not exist in that world).

attack China in 1978.¹⁸ But suppose we wish to think about what Carter would be doing today, if he had not won the Presidency. In that case, we shall not want the definite description, 'the President of the U.S.,' to carry over for Carter; we shall want another one to be controlling, e.g., 'the 1976 Democratic Presidential nominee.' And if we want to think about what he would have done if he had lost the nomination, we must choose still a different description as controlling; and if the problem is what he would have done if he hadn't been Governor of Georgia, still a different one; and so on back, until we have him in the womb. Beyond that point, we simply run out of definite descriptions which could carry over.¹⁹ That

¹⁸ Of course, thanks to the principle of minimal alteration, as soon as 'the President of the U.S.' carries over for Carter into the protasis-worlds, all of the facts of his actual life up until his becoming President carry over along with it, as far as possible.

¹⁹ It must not be imagined that as carry-over content is reduced at one end, it fills back in at the other. The possible Jimmy Carter who lost to Jerry Ford must not be required to have character-traits which the real Carter has acquired only through the experience of the Presidency. The possible Carter who was born black cannot be required to have any traits of the real one, since even the identities of his parents would have to be different. This amounts to saying that the real Carter has no black counterpart, in the technical sense of that term, about whom we can say anything.

Why, then, can we imagine someone's referring meaningfully to a black Jimmy Carter? It is because in many cases we are not interested in a genuine counterpart (or trans-world identical) of Carter but in an *analog* of Carter. A black peanut processor with ambitions on the governorship of a southern state would likely be called a black Jimmy Carter, that is, a black analog of Carter. A Swedish tenor with a certain kind of voice is a Swedish Caruso. Averroes is a Moorish Aristotle. Nureyev is a new Nijinski. The woman who founds a new humanity is a new Eve. These are all analogs, not counterparts. In order to establish analogs, one must do three things: (1) one must pick a certain prominent property of the original bearer of the name, e.g. of Caruso; (2) one must define 'a Caruso' as anyone who has that property, e.g. sings tenor with a certain style and power; and thereby (3) one must turn 'Caruso' into a predicate (or an indefinite description) rather than a proper name—a predicate which works like a *pros hen* analogy, in which Enrico is only the prime analogate. (For Aquinas's views on such a proper-name-turned-predicate, see *Summa Theol.* I, q. 13, a. 9).

is why protases like these—‘if Carter had been a Roosevelt,’ ‘if Hegel had been Japanese,’ ‘if Homer had written *Catch-22*’—strike us as pointless, comical, or bewildering. We cannot expect to learn anything pertinent to the actual people from counterfactuals which begin that way.

Now, to return at last to theology, what definite descriptions whose referent is Mary in the actual world shall the defender of the *debitum conditionatum* want to carry over into the protasis-worlds in which, allegedly, she contracts original sin?

It is certainly clear that he has to make a choice, because there is at least one definite description which must *not* carry over. I refer, of course, to ‘the woman predestined to the Immaculate Conception.’ For if we allow *that* description to carry over, we require each counterpart of Mary to be that very woman, and so it turns out that Mary does not contract original sin in any possible world whatever. For since God cannot fail, slip up, or change His mind, it cannot possibly happen that the woman predestined to that privilege (whoever she may be) fails to receive it. So, if we are to get a true (non-analytic) counterfactual whose apodosis is ‘Mary would have contracted original sin,’ then, no matter what the protasis may be, the description, ‘the woman predestined to the Immaculate Conception,’ must not be allowed to carry over from the actual world into the protasis-worlds.

It is important not to allow the question about the *debitum conditionatum* to be turned into a question about an analog of Mary. For it is surely plausible to say that an analog of Mary is a woman perfectly free from sin. So whoever contracts original sin is not “a Mary,” and a Mary cannot contract original sin. The inference is sound but irrelevant to the *debitum* problem; for the actual person who was Mary was not necessarily a Mary. The grace which she had was contingently hers, not essentially or necessarily so. Similarly, a Caruso has to be a great singer. Enrico has no analog who can’t sing. But Caruso was not necessarily a Caruso; if he had contracted asthma as a child, he would not have been a great singer; he has a counterpart who can’t sing.

In a word, the justifiable assertion that Mary has no analog who contracts original sin does not prove that she has no counterpart who contracts it. The soundness of the *debitum conditionatum* turns upon the latter.

In a word,

- (11) *If some condition, 'P,' had been true, 'the woman predestined to the Immaculate Conception contracts original sin' would have been true*

is false for any non-trivial condition whatsoever, because the apodosis is impossible *de dicto*.²⁰

Next, it is highly probable in theology that another definite description, 'the woman predestined to the Divine Maternity,' must not be allowed to carry over either. I have in mind the following considerations.

God is infinitely holy *per essentiam*. Therefore in every possible world He is infinitely opposed to sin. The more intimate the relation in which a rational creature stands to Him, therefore, the more stringently He requires holiness in that creature. *Atqui* the Divine Maternity is the most intimate relation in which a human person can stand to a Divine Person. Therefore, in all possible worlds in which someone is predestined to the Divine Maternity, God demands of whoever that someone is the greatest holiness which He can demand of a human person (consistent with her being redeemed). Now, from what has happened it is valid to infer what is possible. A degree of human holiness which includes immaculate conception is therefore possible (and is consistent with being redeemed). Therefore, in every possible world in which someone is predestined to the Divine Maternity, God demands of that someone a degree of holiness which includes immaculate conception.

This argument, as a theological *ratio*, is the all the more convincing in that one cannot see a cogent objection to it which is not an objection against the Immaculate Conception itself. After all, one has distinguished company if one claims that an

²⁰ On the sense of the term, see Alvin Plantinga, *De Re et De Dicto* in *Nous* 3 (1969) 235-258; Richmond H. Thomason, *Modal Logic and Metaphysics* in Karel Lambert, ed. *The Logical Way of Doing Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969) 119-146.

immaculate conception is impossible, that it conflicts with God's arrangements in Adam, or that it conflicts with being redeemed by Christ. But once the possibility and factuality of the Immaculate Conception are admitted, what form is left for an objection to take? Does the argument limit God's freedom? Hardly, unless one wants to claim that God is "free" to be less holy than He is, or to will less holiness in His creatures than He has in fact willed. Does the argument give too much dignity to the office of Divine Maternity? Hardly, unless the Catholic understanding of that Maternity has been flawed since Ephesus.²¹ Does the argument make Mary's grace essential or inevitable in her? No, because the argument attaches the Immaculate Conception to the office of Theotokos, so that it remains to Mary an unexacted grace that she was chosen to fill that office.²²

²¹ If a rather low view of the Divine Maternity seems plausible to most Protestants, the reason may be not merely maculism but a profound misconception of the hypostatic union; see Yves Congar, *Vrai et fausse réforme dans l'Eglise* (Paris, 1950) 452; idem *Le Christ, Marie et l'Eglise* (Paris, 1952) 33-37.

²² Here is a different kind of objection, in the style of Ambrosius Catharinus: one says that the argument overlooks the fact that the person predestined to the Divine Maternity would have been deprived of the privilege of the Immaculate Conception (hence would have been determined to contract original sin), if God had chosen to allow His efficacious will to continue to attain that person solely as one of the "many" included in Adam.

I have answered this objection in a previous article, in a way which stands up independently of whether Mary's predestination comes *ante* or *post praevisum lapsum* in the order of efficacious decrees in the order of intention (*A Logician's Reflexions* in *MS* 29 [1978], sections 1.9.0-10). Briefly, I proved (1) that Mary never was included in Adam in the relevant sense of mystical solidarity with him as acting to keep or lose original justice; (2) no efficacious will of God could, under any priority, have attained Mary solely "under the title" of solidarity with Adam in any case; (3) even if, ahead of the efficacious decree establishing Mary's supernatural privileges, there is in God a logically prior efficacious decree determining her to exist in the natural order in these flesh and bones, descended from Adam *post lapsum*, nevertheless such a prior decree does not constitute a subjection to original sin, because the conditions in which such

These considerations (among others) seem to me to lend an unimpeachable theological integrity to St. Pius X's famous statement that God's Son had to preserve, or ought to have preserved (*debuisset*), His own mother from original sin.²³ The *ratio theologica* shows that more is at stake than an effusion of Papal piety. Plus, to say what God has to do, or even ought to do, is strong speaking. More is at stake than an *argumentum decentiae*. I conclude, therefore, that this Pian thesis:

(12) *Obligatorily, the Mother of God is immaculately conceived*

(where the 'obligatorily' is taken as a *de dicto* modality) is more probable in theology, if not indeed certain.²⁴

As a result, the defender of the *debitum conditionatum* cannot be *certain* that he has a true, non-trivial counterfactual on which to base his case, unless he stipulates that the counterpart of Mary (the possible Mary) who contracts original sin is not the person predestined to the Divine Maternity.

In a word,

a decree posits Mary's existence are only necessary conditions (not a sufficient condition) for the contraction of original sin.

²³ St. Pius X, *Ad diem illum*, in *ASS* 36 (1904) 456.

²⁴ This 'obligatorily' is just a one-word substitute for 'it ought to be the case that.' As understood here, this oughtness differs from necessity in two ways, formally and conceptually. Formally, the only difference is this: whereas 'Necessarily *p*' implies that '*p*' is true, 'Obligatorily *p*' does not imply that '*p*' is true. Otherwise the two notions have just the same formal properties; e.g., 'Obligatorily *p*' is interchangeable with 'Not permissibly not *p*,' just as 'Necessarily *p*' amounts to 'Not possibly not *p*.' Conceptually, the two notions differ in that whereas what is "necessary" is true in every possible world which represents a fact-alternative, so to speak, to the actual world, what is "obligatory" is true in every possible world which represents a deontically perfect alternative to the actual world. Thus, if the Pian thesis is true, a possible world in which the Mother of God is not immaculately conceived (contracts original sin) is morally imperfect; to actualize it, impermissible.

Now since what is impermissible would never be done by a morally perfect Being, we can transform the Pian thesis into a counterfactual formula which will be more convenient to work with hereafter, namely: *if she*

- (13) *If some condition, 'P,' had been true, 'the woman predestined to the Divine Maternity contracts original sin' would have been true*

is probably false for any non-trivial condition whatsoever, because the apodosis is probably impossible *de dicto*.

This point is sometimes thought to be decisive against any form of the *debitum*, but it is not. The *debitum*-defender ought not to be troubled by it. The position to which the point is fatal is maculism, and insofar as debitism is the ghost of maculism, of course, it is not surprising that debitists resist it. Nevertheless, correctly understood, the *debitum* ought to have nothing to do with the office of Theotokos; it should not claim that this office is open to persons who contract original sin; rather, the *debitum* is supposed to have to do with the person who in fact held that office; it should claim that she might not have held it and that, *in* that case, or at least in some case, she would have contracted original sin.

But who is that person? What *is* the description which must carry over from the actual world into the protasis-worlds, so as to determine who counts as Mary in those worlds? So far as I can see, this question has at most one plausible answer.

We are looking for a description which prescind from all special offices and singles out simply *that* physical person who was named Mary. Clearly, the description we want cannot be of the ostensive kind ('the object I am now pointing to') unless we happen to be enjoying a private revelation. So what is left? Well, it is standard practice in most societies to say who people are by stipulating who their parents are. And do theologians have in mind by 'Mary' anyone other than the person conceived by Joachim and Anne? Would the Mariological Society accept a paper on the sorrows of the "Cousin of Elizabeth" in a possible world in which the cousin of Elizabeth was *not* the

had not been preserved from original sin, Mary would not have been predestined to the Divine Maternity.

daughter of Joachim and Anne? Then the conclusion is obvious: the description which must remain true of Mary in the protasis-worlds is 'the person conceived by Joachim and Anne,' and we may as well add 'at such-and-such a time.'

It is clear that if the defender of the *debitum conditionatum* has a serious case to make at all, he must be able to stipulate a condition under which the person conceived by Joachim and Anne, devoid of all special offices, would have contracted original sin. I refute the *debitum conditionatum* by showing that even this modest challenge cannot be met.

St. Ephraim the Syrian asked the question, "If God had not become man, why would Mary have been created?"²⁵ St. Andrew of Crete declared that if the Cross did not exist, Christ would not have stood upon the earth, *nor the Virgin*.²⁶ St. John Damascene addressed to the infant Mary these words: "Thou shalt have a life higher than nature, but not for thine own sake. Thou has been begotten for the sake of what thou shalt have from God, for whose sake thou hast come into the world."²⁷ If these Fathers are correct, one may paraphrase St. Paul and say that, for her, to live was Christ in a stunningly literal sense. The point being made is not the vacuous one that if there had been no Incarnation there would have been no mother of the Incarnate, but the strong one that there would have been no daughter of Joachim and Anne, no physical person Mary. It is in this sense that many scholastic Mariologists have understood and defended the Patristic opinion.²⁸

²⁵ St. Ephraim, *Sermo de Transfiguratione Christi*, cited by G. Alastruey, *Tratado de la Virgen Santísima*, 4th ed. (Madrid, 1956) 64.

²⁶ St. Andrew of Crete, *Oratio de Cruce*, cited by Alastruey, *op.cit.*, 56.

²⁷ St. John Damascene, *Oratio de nativitate Virginis*, cited by Alastruey, *op.cit.*, 64.

²⁸ Alastruey, *op.cit.*, 64-65; J. A. de Aldama, S.J., *Mariologia seu de Matre Redemptoris in Sacrae Theologiae Summa*, 4th ed. (Madrid: BAC, 1961) III, 331, note 3, and "Scholion," p. 333; see also the final section of Fr. J. B. Carol's study, *Reflections on the Problem of Mary's Preservative Redemption* in this issue of *MS*, and the literature cited there.

Now, in exact proportion as this opinion is probable, the *debitum conditionatum* is improbable. If the former is certain, the latter is untenable. No one can hold both without rejecting the Pian thesis as impossible. Let us illustrate this logical conflict by taking as our sample way to assert the *debitum conditionatum* the late Fr. Balić's proposition:

- (14) *If she had not been preserved, Mary would have contracted original sin.*²⁹

I reply with the Patristic thesis:

- (15) *If she had not been predestined to the Divine Maternity, Mary would not have existed.*

If he accepts this thesis, the *debitum*-defender must *either*

²⁹ *Vgl* 11 (1957) 499. In an earlier draft of this paper the author also advanced an argument to the effect that Balić's proposition is a thinly-veiled tautology. The argument turns on an interpretation of 'not preserved' which is slightly different from the one I shall use above, in the body of the text. (It is not surprising that one should be able to find different interpretations; 'preserved' is a highly complicated predicate; one might mean five or six different things by denying it.) In the text, I shall take 'not preserved' as equivalent to 'not predestined to be preserved' or the like, that is, as *not yet* presupposing Mary's existence. Here, I take it as indicating an already verified privation and hence as presupposing Mary's existence; as soon as one does so, the following argument comes into play.

The predicates 'not preserved from original sin' and 'contracts original sin' and their negations, taken as verified by something present or absent in an already existing subject, make sense only as affirmed of human beings. In these subjects, preservation and non-contraction signify in the real identically the same grace under the same intention (i.e., as repugnant to original sin); their negations, non-preservation and contraction, both signify the absence of that grace under the same intention (i.e., as entailing original sin). In this sense, not to be preserved *means* to lack grace, which *is* the contraction of sin. In Mary already existing, therefore, her preservation *is* her non-contraction, and her contraction is the only thing which *could have* counted as her non-preservation. Hence protasis and apodosis in Balić's proposition are identical. Notice that this is the only interpretation of these predicates which makes the proposition indubitable and that it also makes it tautological. One may as well say that if she hadn't been preserved, she wouldn't have been preserved.

Hereafter, in the text above, however, I follow a non-tautological interpretation.

abandon his own claim, (14), or else be prepared to defend the contradictory of the Pian thesis (i.e., permissibly the Mother of God is not immaculately conceived), so as to be able to assert:

- (16) *If she had not been preserved, Mary might still have been predestined to the Divine Maternity.*³⁰

This is not very safe; there is a powerful argument and a Papal teaching against it, as we have seen. Nevertheless, the *debitum*-defender cannot now afford to accept the Pian thesis; for as soon as he does, it follows that

- (17) *If she had not been preserved, Mary would not have existed.*

And since 'Mary does not exist' and 'Mary contracts original sin' are obviously not jointly satisfiable in any possible world, (17) entails that Balić's proposition is false—and when it falls, the historic subjunctives of Grosseteste and Scotus fall along with it:

- (18) *Mary's soul was purified not from a sin which was ever in her but from one which would have been in her, if she had not been sanctified.*³¹
- (19) *For she would have contracted original sin by reason of the common propagation, if it had not been prevented through the grace of the Mediator.*³²

³⁰ This is an example of the weaker, 'might' counterfactual; see above, note 13. Notice that the relations of contradiction, contrariety, and sub-contrariety between 'would' and 'might' counterfactuals form a traditional square of opposition:

If 'P' had been the case,
'Q' would have been the case.

If 'P' had been the case,
'Q' would not have been.

If 'P' had been the case
'Q' might have been the case.

If 'P' had been the case,
'Q' might not have been.

³¹ Robert Grosseteste, *Sermon on the Tota Pulchra*, ed. Ephrem Longpré, O.F.M. *AFH* 26 (1953) 551.

³² John Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense, lib. III, dist. 3, q. 1*; ed. C. Balić, *Ioannis Duns Scoti Doctoris Subtilis ed Mariani Theologiae Marianae Elementa* (Sibenici: Academia Mariana Internationalis, 1933) 35.

All these counterfactuals assume that Mary would have existed, grace or no grace, as someone whose existence was simply to be given in the order of nature. But if the Patristic thesis is true, Mary in the actual world has no such natural-Providential existence; she has only a predestined existence. In a moment I shall try to show the theological splendor of this thesis. Before doing so, it is worth noticing that the *debitum conditionatum* collapses even if a weaker thesis is advanced against it.

Please go back to Fr. Balić's proposition,

- (14) *If she had not been preserved, Mary would have contracted original sin.*

This is true if and only if Mary existed and contracted original sin in every possible world which differs from the actual world just enough to make it true that Mary was not preserved. Let us assume that the *debitum*-defender, resisting the doctrine of Pius X, thinks it safer to defend:

- (16) *If she had not been preserved, Mary might still have been predestined to the Divine Maternity.*

But if he thinks that (16) is safe, he must also accept its subcontrary:

- (16') *If she had not been preserved, Mary might not have been predestined to the Divine Maternity.*

He now confronts the Patristic thesis. Suppose he will not admit it but also declines to assert the opposite. Suppose he

It looks as though Scotus was misled by the following inference. Every natural descendant of sinful Adam contracts original sin, unless it is prevented. Mary was a natural descendent of sinful Adam. If it was not prevented, Mary contracted original sin. Therefore, if it had not been prevented, Mary would have contracted original sin.

This inference is fallacious. Please watch the following: Every victim of assassination was killed by someone. Kennedy was a victim of assassination. If Oswald did not kill Kennedy, someone else did. Therefore, if Oswald had not killed Kennedy, someone else would have.

Students of logic are indebted for this example to Ernest Adams, *Subjunctive and Indicative Conditionals in Foundations of Language* 6 (1970) 89-94.

admits only that the Patristic thesis might be true. Then we have:

(15') *If she had not been predestined to the Divine Maternity, Mary might not have existed.*

But from (16') and (15') it already follows that

(17') *If she had not been preserved, Mary might not have existed,*

and this already falsifies Balić's proposition. From these premises one is entitled to draw no stronger conclusion than

(14') *If she had not been preserved, Mary might have contracted original sin,*

and this is no longer a *debitum* but a mere possibility.

Thus, even if one rejects St. Pius X's doctrine so as to assert the less speculative-looking (16); still, so long as one admits even the possibility of the Patristic thesis, the *debitum conditionatum* collapses. From that fact, one may infer what strong measures are needed to save the thing: one must be prepared to prove the very contraries of the Pian and Patristic theses, namely, that Mary would have existed and would have been the Mother of God regardless of the Immaculate Conception: There is the exact prejudice I mentioned at the outset: one theologizes as though the dogma of 1854 made no difference to anything. But we are now in a better position to see what that prejudice amounts to: it is a commitment (open or tacit) to the contraries of the Pian or Patristic theses. And how, pray tell, can that commitment be backed up? What principle would make a proof of those contraries forthcoming? So far as the present writer can see, the principle would have to be a claim to the following effect: necessarily, if the supernatural presupposes the natural, then every natural (overt, physical) aspect of every event which was or is to occur in world history was efficaciously willed prior (logically) to any decree respecting grace and glory. This claim, far stronger than the traditional Thomistic teaching, is open to the following objection. Surely, the miracles and other special effects of salvation his-

tory would not have occurred unless salvation itself had been intended by God, i.e., unless someone had been predestined to grace and glory. Therefore, if the alleged principle is sound, miracles either do not occur or else are natural coincidences which would have occurred independently of their being assigned a salvific value by God or by the community of faith as "signs." Transparently, this last is the Abbé Loisy's conception of the supernatural economy of revelation, not the Catholic one.³³ So, since the one principle which, if sound, would make a proof of the contraries of the Pian and Patristic theses forthcoming is demonstrably not sound, those contraries cannot be proved, and the *debitum conditionatum* collapses.

Now having illustrated the logical power of the Patristic thesis, I should like to conclude with a glance at its theological power and at the magnificent prospect which it offers for a new flowering of Marian theology, free at last from the shadow of debitism and faithful to the perspectives of *Lumen gentium*.

First, the Patristic thesis illustrates and deepens the parallel between Mary and Eve—so much so that that parallel finally fails without it. If God had decided not to make Adam, what would have been the point of making Eve? If the *raison d'être* of Eve was to be helpmate for Adam, the *raison d'être* of Mary must be her role in the work of Christ. Hence it is hardly surprising that throughout the New Testament, Mary is so inseparable from the Incarnation that her existence is unintelligible without it.³⁴

Secondly, the Patristic thesis illustrates and deepens the doctrine, taught in an especially solemn way by the Ordinary

³³ "Le miracle est le train du monde et de la vie contemplé par la foi, qui seule en pénètre l'enigme; le même train du monde et de la vie observé en quelque sort du dehors par la raison est l'ordre de la nature, le domaine de la science et de la philosophie," Loisy wrote, under the name 'Firmin,' in *Les preuves et l'économie de la Révélation* in *Revue du clergé français* (March 15, 1900) 128.

³⁴ See the remarks of J.-B. Terrien, S.J., *La Mère de Dieu et la mère des hommes*, 6th ed. (Paris, 1900) Livre II, c. 1.

Magisterium, that Mary's predestination was joined with that of Christ in "*uno eodemque decreto*."³⁵ Now, no matter where this one-same decree occurs in the order of efficacious decrees in the order of intention, it is surely the case that Mary and Christ are joined in it because they are to cooperate, e.g., as mother and Son. But such cooperation requires at least partial simultaneity of their existences in space-time. Mary has to exist at the time the Incarnation will occur, if she is to cooperate with Christ as Theotokos or in any other way. Therefore the natural contingencies relative to the starting-point of Mary's existence ought to be at the free disposition of God, so that she might exist whenever, in the wisdom of God, the blessed moment for the irruption of Eternity into time might come. It is therefore inconvenient, to say the least, to suggest that the fact and date of her existence were already set in concrete, so to speak, in the order of natural providence. Which is more plausible, after all: that the Incarnation happened when it did because that was where Mary was in time, or that Mary existed when she did because that was where the Incarnation was in time? Or shall one escape the dichotomy by saying something that sounds even worse: given that someone was to be predestined together with Christ *in eodem decreto*, Mary was picked for the honor simply because she was the future person in the order of nature who happened to be at the right place at the right time?! No, the doctrine that Mary and Christ were predestined together strongly supports the Patristic thesis that Mary's existence was in a unique way in God's hands, just as was the time to reveal the Mystery hidden from the ages, the time to begin the existence of the Church.

A theology freed from the last traces of maculism by the Pagan and Patristic theses will finally know what to make of

³⁵ Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, ed. A. Tondini, *Le encicliche mariane*, 2nd ed. (Rome, 1954) 32; Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, *D-Sch* 3902.

