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## Our Lady's Virginity in the Birth of Jesus

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## OUR LADY'S VIRGINITY IN THE BIRTH OF JESUS

ATTACKS on the Catholic dogma of the virginity of Mary have for so long borne either on the conception or on the question of the brethren of the Lord, that the part of the dogma dealing with the virginity in and during birth, seldom receives much attention. By and large, that has been true of the whole history of the dogma

It is not that the Church has neglected to keep the truth explicitly before her children. It is enshrined in the Liturgy of both East and West<sup>1</sup> as for example, when the Preface of the Mass for the Blessed Virgin proclaims that "virginitatis gloria permanente, lumen aeternum mundo effudit, Iesum Christum Dominum nostrum." It is found in the Office for the Feast of the Divine Maternity and of the Blessed Virgin for Saturday, in the language of St Ambrose, St. Jerome and St Leo the Great.

The dogma is set forth in some of the major Catechisms,<sup>2</sup> though not in those for the use of children. It usually finds mention in sermons only indirectly or partially, under the topic of the absence of suffering on the part of Mary.

At any rate, the dogma has suffered from a lack of emphasis as compared with the other two parts of the dogma of Our Lady's virginity. This, however, is but natural in view of the fact that from a moral point of view and in relation to marriage, the virginity *in partu* is a material feature as compared to

<sup>1</sup>C Gumbinger, O.F.M Cap, *Mary in the Eastern Liturgies*, in *Mariology*, ed J Carol, vol 1 (Milwaukee, 1955), pp 200, 208, 236, S Daly, O.S.B., *Mary in the Western Liturgy*, *ibid*, pp 260, 278

<sup>2</sup>*Catechism of the Council of Trent*, ed McHugh and Callan (New York, 1934), p. 45; J Deharbe, *A Complete Catechism of the Catholic Religion*, 6th ed (New York, 1924), p 116, Farrell, *The Parish Catechism* (Chicago, 1954), p. 44.

the formal element of the renunciation of the use of marriage. This latter generally has been the point of departure of those who attacked the virginity of Mary. It is in view of these considerations, I think, that we must give a limited measure of assent to the statement of J. P. Junglas<sup>3</sup> that the virginity *in partu* does not pertain to the common and public preaching of the Church to the people

## I

## STATE OF THE QUESTION

What does the virginity *in partu* mean? According to the usual teaching of Sacred Theology, it means the issuing of the child from the womb of his mother through the channels of birth into the light of day without the womb being opened and consequently without the destruction of the physical signs of virginity possessed by one who is virgin in conception. Secondary and tertiary elements are included, and it seems rightly, by Scheeben,<sup>4</sup> which consist in the absence of suffering and labor usually associated with childbirth, and in the absence of the *sordes nativitatis* due to the rupturing, cutting, discarding of blood vessels, membranes, placenta, etc., involved in gestation.

The second and third elements seem to follow, logically enough, once granted the miracle of the emergence of the child from a closed womb, which is strongly attested in the Patristic texts<sup>5</sup> Our main concern therefore is the first point. The Fathers of the Church have given expression to it by the phrases *utero clauso et obsignato, signaculo virginitalis intacto et inviolato, signaculum permanens* or *claustrum inviolatum*,

<sup>3</sup> J. P. Junglas, *Die Lehre der Kirche* (Bonn, 1936), p. 143

<sup>4</sup> M. J. Scheeben, *Mariology*, vol. 1, tr. by T. L. M. J. Geukers (St. Louis, 1946), pp. 103-104

<sup>5</sup> Cf. D. Petavius, *Dogmata Theologica*, vol. 7 (Paris, 1867), pp. 68-76.

*septum inviolatum* With admirable restraint and modesty they have usually not descended to particulars in specifying the physiological signification of these expressions, though it would seem they usually have in mind the intact hymen, which traditionally and perhaps still today, is recognized as the most important evidence of physical virginity in marriage cases.<sup>6</sup> This reticence is all the more admirable in view of the fact that, as Merkelbach says,<sup>7</sup> both in times past and still at the present time, controversy has existed and still exists as to what properly constitutes the seal of virginity. According to Merkelbach, therefore, it does not seem necessary in the declaration of the dogma to determine precisely in what the seal of virginity consists but it is necessary to say that the seal remained uninjured and entire.

Albert Mitterer, in his thought-provoking work on the dogma and biology of the Holy Family,<sup>8</sup> has raised the question as to whether the second and third elements above mentioned pertain to the dogma of Mary's virginity *in partu*, and even, whether the element of the closed womb is pertinent. He wishes to know whether they are alleged by the Fathers on the authority of revelation, or merely as patristic conclusions, and whether the premises of such conclusions are valid. He also wishes to know whether their statements have the definitive clarity which is necessary for a criterion of revelation. The answer he relinquishes to the exegetes, historians of dogma and dogmaticians, with whom he protests himself to be at one as regards faith in revealed truths and truths proven scientifically from revelation.

Mitterer's own conclusion is that, "from present day bio-

<sup>6</sup> Good and Kelly, *Marriage, Morals and Medical Ethics* (New York, 1951), pp 34, 177.

<sup>7</sup> B. H. Merkelbach, O.P., *Mariologia* (Paris, 1939), p. 248, no. 4.

<sup>8</sup> A. Mitterer, *Dogma und Biologie der Heiligen Familie* (Vienna, 1952), pp 98-131.

logy we must say that they do not touch the virginity of Mary and can in nowise and never constitute the essence of the full corporal virginity *in partu* of Mary."<sup>9</sup> He analyses the teaching of St. Thomas<sup>10</sup> that the integrity of the hymen pertains *per accidens* and *concomitanter* to virginity, and that its destruction through any other cause than venereal delectation, is no more prejudicial to virginity than the destruction of a hand or foot.<sup>11</sup> These teachings Mitterer approves, but he accuses St. Thomas of being inexact and inconsequential for holding nevertheless that intactness of the hymen belongs to the perfection of virginity.<sup>12</sup> It is merely a sign thereof.<sup>13</sup>

Mitterer's general position might be summed up by saying that the opening of the womb and its consequences pertain not to virginity but to maternity, and that their denial would seem to derogate from the full maternity of Mary. The trend of Mitterer's thought suggests a certain kinship with the idea of Durandus on the virginity *in partu* which came into discussion in the brief controversy of a year ago<sup>14</sup> Incidental to his theory of the impossibility of two bodies coexisting in the same place, Durandus suggested the explanation of the virgin birth of Christ by the dilation of the members and natural

<sup>9</sup> "Auf Grund heutiger biologischer Erkenntnis musste man sagen, diese vier besonderen Angaben treffen nicht die Jungfrauschaft Mariae und können nie und nimmer das Wesen der vollen Jungfrauschaft Mariae in der Geburt ausmachen" (*op cit*, p 122)

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit*, pp 105-109, 115

<sup>11</sup> 2-2, 152, 1 ad 3

<sup>12</sup> *Quodlibet* 6, 18, Mitterer, *op cit*, pp 108, 109

<sup>13</sup> Cf Mitterer, *op cit*, p 107

<sup>14</sup> Cf Clifford E L Henry, M.D., *A Doctor Considers the Birth of Jesus*, in *The Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, vol 54 (1953), pp 219-223; J B Carol, O.F.M. [*Mary's Virginity in Partu*], *ibid*, vol 54 (1954), pp 446-447; Bernard Ambrozic, O.F.M., *Concerning Dr Henry's and Rev Dr Carol's Discussion*, *ibid*, vol 54, pp 636-638, Joseph C Fenton, *Our Lady's Virginity in Partu*, in *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, vol 130 (1954), pp 46-53

openings without any rupture or breaking.<sup>15</sup> His opinion achieved no following at the time and was severely judged by later theologians.

It may be of some worth to recall the two errors refuted by Ratramnus and Paschasius Radbertus in the 9th century. The error refuted by the first was the denial that the birth of Christ took place through the portal of the womb. The error refuted by the second was the affirmation that the birth of Christ had to, and did take place in the ordinary way of all mothers in order that the birth of Christ might be called a true birth. Both errors were refuted on the basis of the common doctrine of the Church. There is no trace of doctrinal opposition between the two men, either in their writings or in any contemporary writing.<sup>16</sup>

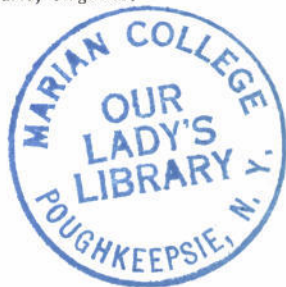
## II

### TEACHING OF THE MAGISTERIUM ON THE VIRGINITY "IN PARTU"

The first explicit formulation of the *virginitas in partu* is found in the letter of the Synod of Milan to Pope Siricius in the year 390. It was formulated in these words: "But if they do not believe the teaching of the priests, let them believe the oracles of Christ, let them believe the admonitions of the angels saying: 'For nothing is impossible with God.' Let them believe the Apostles' Creed which the Church of Rome ever guards and preserves inviolate. . . . This is the virgin who conceived in her womb and as a virgin bore a son. For thus it is written: 'Behold a virgin shall conceive in the womb and shall bear a son.' He has said not only that a virgin will conceive but also that a virgin shall give birth. Now, who is that gate of the temple,

<sup>15</sup> In *IV Sent.*, d. 44, q. 6, cited by E. Dublanchy, S.M., *Marie, virginité, enseignement patristique*, in *D.T.C.*, vol. 9, col. 2385.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. E. Dublanchy, *art. cit.*, col. 2383.



that outer gate toward the East, which remains closed, and no one, he says, shall pass through it, except the God of Israel alone? Is not Mary this portal through whom the Redeemer entered into this world? . . . This portal is the blessed Mary of whom it is written that the Lord shall pass through it and it shall be closed after birth, because a virgin did conceive and give birth. What then is there impossible of belief if, contrary to the natural way of birth, Mary has given birth and remained a virgin, when contrary to the course of nature, the sea looked and fled and the waters of the Jordan turned back toward their source? " 17

This document represents the teaching of the Bishop of Milan and a number of his suffragan bishops who likewise signed the letter of the Synod. It is remarkable for its reference to the Scriptures and to the faith of the Roman Church as expressed in the Apostles' Creed in support of Mary's virginity *in partu*.

The next explicit reference in the teaching of the Magisterium is found about fifty years later in the *Tome* of St. Leo the Great, of June 449: "She brought Him forth without the loss of virginity even as she conceived Him without its loss. . . . The Son of God, therefore, came down from His heavenly throne without relinquishing the glory of His Father, and entered this lower world by way of a new order and new mode of birth. . . . By way of a new mode of birth insofar as virginity inviolate which knew not the desire of the flesh supplied the material flesh. From His Mother the Lord took nature, not sin. Jesus Christ was born from a virgin's womb by a miraculous birth. And yet His nature is not on that account unlike to ours, for He that is true God is also true Man " 18

The significance of this pronouncement of the Pope was en-

<sup>17</sup> St. Ambrose, *Epist.* 42, 4 sq., *P.L.* 16, 1173-1174

<sup>18</sup> St. Leo, *Epist.* 28, *P.L.* 54, 759

hanced by its acceptance by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 and the allocution which the Fathers of the Council addressed to the Emperor.<sup>19</sup> It manifested the secure acceptance of the belief at that time, not only for the Western but the Eastern Church as well.

A corroboration of this fact, and at the same time an implicit reference to the virginity *in partu*, is found in the incorporation of the term "ever virgin" (aeiparthenos) by the Greeks in the fifth Oecumenical Council, the second of Constantinople, over a hundred years later in 553.<sup>20</sup>

In 649 the first Lateran Council gave explicit dogmatic definition, under pain of anathema, to the belief in its third canon: "If anyone does not in accord with the Holy Fathers acknowledge the holy and ever virgin and immaculate Mary as really and truly the Mother of God, inasmuch as she, in the fulness of time, and without seed, conceived by the Holy Spirit, God the Word Himself, who before all time was born of God the Father, and without loss of integrity brought Him forth, and after His birth preserved her virginity inviolate, let him be condemned."<sup>21</sup>

At this Council of 105 Bishops which is considered practically the equivalent of a general Council<sup>22</sup> and which comprised in its membership all parts of Italy, including Ravenna,<sup>23</sup> there was no discussion on this canon, and none was needed.<sup>24</sup> The dogma had been in pacific possession already for two centuries. It has enjoyed that status in the Latin

<sup>19</sup> *D.B.*, no. 143, n. 3. Cf. G. Jouassard, *Marie à travers la patristique: maternité divine, virginité, sainteté*, in *Maria*, ed. H. du Manoir, vol. 1 (Paris, 1949), p. 138.

<sup>20</sup> *D.B.*, no. 214.

<sup>21</sup> *D.B.*, no. 256.

<sup>22</sup> J. Tixeront, *Histoire des dogmes*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1922), p. 180.

<sup>23</sup> Hergenroether, *Histoire de l'église*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1903), p. 421.

<sup>24</sup> G. Jouassard, *art. cit.*, p. 148.



Church ever since.<sup>25</sup> The Fathers were merely ratifying the authoritative teaching of the Church since Leo the Great in the *Tomus ad Flavianum*. The Greeks had no difficulty in accepting the Lateran Canon. They had some representatives there.<sup>26</sup> It was the universal belief of the Church and was a true dogma, even if the Council is not classified among the Oecumenical Councils in the strict sense of the word.

The Canons of the Lateran Council were accepted by Pope Agathon later in 680 on the occasion of the sixth Oecumenical Council, the third of Constantinople of 681, and the Lateran canons were received by the Council.<sup>27</sup>

The subsequent ages follow the same pattern, simply incorporating the virginity of Mary in childbirth as an article of faith long since in secure possession. The profession of faith of Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople, accepted by Leo III in 811, contains the words: "[Deus] virginem quoque, quae supernaturaliter et ineffabiliter pepererat, post partum virginem conservavit, virginitate illius secundum naturam nulla ex parte demutata aut labefactata."<sup>28</sup>

The condemnation by Paul IV in 1555 of the Unitarian errors is one of the last official utterances of the Church on the question. It condemns anyone who would assert, teach or believe "that the same most Blessed Virgin . . . did not always retain the integrity of virginity, that is, before birth, during birth and continuously after birth. . . ."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, note 2

<sup>26</sup> G. Jouassard, *art. cit.*, pp. 138-139

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *D.B.*, no. 254, n. 1, no. 288, n. 2, also E. R. Carroll, O. Carm., *Mary in the Documents of the Magisterium*, in *Mariology*, ed. J. Carol, vol. 1 (Milwaukee, 1955), p. 14, Paul Palmer, S. J., *Mary in the Documents of the Church* (Westminster, Md., 1952), p. 36

<sup>28</sup> *D.B.*, no. 314a, n. 3.

<sup>29</sup> *D.B.*, no. 993, Engl. transl., Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78

## III

## THE VIRGINITY OF MARY "IN PARTU" IN SACRED SCRIPTURE

At least from the time of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the virginity of Mary *in partu* found acceptance throughout the Orient both with the orthodox and heretics, even though Anastasius the Sinaite (d. 700) remarked that there was no witness of Scripture which justified expressly their belief.<sup>30</sup> In spite of such an opinion, Catholic theologians have been accustomed to appeal to the prophecy of Isaias 7, 14, in conjunction with the statement of its fulfillment in Christ, related by St. Matthew 1, 23, as a direct scriptural argument for the dogma. Further indications for the truth are to be seen by Catholic theologians and Scripture scholars in St. Luke's account of the birth, where Mary herself swaddles the Child and lays Him in the manger, and in the account of the presentation in the Temple. A scriptural basis, which however is rather developed as a theological argument, is found by some in St. Luke's "Blessed art thou amongst women," understood in the light of the New Eve parallel and the Protoevangelium of Gen. 3, 15. Moreover, the Fathers frequently saw this dogma in the enclosed garden and sealed fountain of the Canticles 4, 12, and in the closed gate of the Temple, in Ezechiel 44, 1-2.

What of the validity of these arguments?

There is no question of the unanimous tradition of the Fathers in regard to Isaias 7, 14, together with Matthew 1, 23, as witnessing to the virginity in conception. However, it is a much more difficult task to prove it in regard to the virginity *in partu*. Can this truth be derived from the text? Can it be derived from the text itself in its proximate context? Professor Coppens<sup>31</sup> says that it would be difficult to establish that the

<sup>30</sup> G. Jouassard, *art. cit.*, p. 138

<sup>31</sup> J. Coppens, *La prophétie de la Almah*, in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, vol. 28 (1952), p. 665

text proclaims the virginity *in sensu composito maternitatis*, arguing from the phrase alone of the Virgin conceiving and giving birth. It does not forbid that interpretation. It even invites us to think of it, but such a meaning can only be established in virtue of close relation with the various indications in the context. There is moreover the difference of opinion among exegetes as to whether the text is literally or typically Messianic. Certainly the literal Messianic interpretation has been the classic one among Catholic exegetes. But, of late, others, such as Steinmann in the Bible of Jerusalem, have abandoned it as less probable than the other.<sup>32</sup> Professor Coppens, re-examining the question, favors the literal Messianicity.<sup>33</sup>

Obviously there is no place in this paper for an attempt to resolve such a difference of opinion. It does not even seem advisable or necessary to take sides in the matter. It is sufficient to take the Messianicity as admitted in either sense, and as guaranteed in its fulfillment in the New Testament by St. Matthew as realized in the conception and birth of Jesus and both together interpreted in the light of Tradition to mean not only the virginity in conception but in parturition as well.

The force of such a proof therefore depends on two points: whether the text itself bears such an interpretation, and whether there is sufficient strength in the patristic testimony in favor of this interpretation. Let us examine the points in succession.

In his vision the prophet beholds the virgin conceiving and giving birth. He is not concerned with what the *almah* once was or did, but as she is represented in the vision. There, as we know from the New Testament, she is represented as a virgin and, in fact, as the Virgin Mary. It is certainly the Virgin in her virginal conception that is revealed in the vision, as we

<sup>32</sup> *Isaie*, tr by P. Auvray and J. Steinmann, in *La Sainte Bible* (de Jérusalem) (Paris, 1951), p. 46, note a

<sup>33</sup> J. Coppens, *art. cit.*, p. 659

likewise know from the New Testament, and Tradition as the supernatural rule of interpretation. Now, is the *sensu composito* relationship of the Virgin to the act of conceiving also verified in relation to the act of parturition? In the Hebrew text the state of pregnancy is expressed by an adjective; the child-bearing by a participle.<sup>34</sup> Both in the prophetic vision should be rendered by the prophetic perfect tense: <sup>35</sup> "Behold the virgin having conceived and given birth." Both expressions are linked together in apposition with the Virgin. The first expression, contrary to all human presuppositions, does mean that the virgin, while remaining a virgin, nevertheless conceives a child, as we know from the New Testament and Catholic Tradition. The second expression, we know from the Scriptures to have been fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, and we know, at least from the teaching of the Fathers and the Magisterium, that it was fulfilled in a virginal way. Therefore, on account of its equal relationship with the common subject in the text of Scripture, it must be interpreted of the virginal childbearing *in sensu composito*.

The express and distinct witness of Tradition that this is the precise meaning contained in the statement of Isaias is by no means as abundant as for the virginal conception. The letter *Recognovimus* of the Synod of Milan, to Pope Siricius (390) is definite on the matter, stating distinctly that the oracle of Isaias includes both the virginity in conception and in child-birth, as we have seen above.

St. Jerome in his commentary on Isaias, written after 407, likewise seems to interpret 7, 14, of both virginal conception and childbearing: "Ipse descendet in uterum virginalem et ingredietur et egredietur orientalem portam quae semper est

<sup>34</sup> F. Ceuppens, O.P., *De Prophetiis messianicis in Antiquo Testamento* (Rome, 1935), p. 196.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

clausa.”<sup>36</sup> However, it is true that otherwise in the passage Jerome puts no special emphasis on the virginity *in partu*. At most there is the phrase “quod ipsa scilicet Virgo quae concipiet et pariet, hoc Christum appellatura sit nomine.”

Many other testimonies are cited by various authors but it is very difficult to discover any texts which explicitly make the distinct reference to the virginity *in partu*. The point of view is always that of conception. Perhaps, therefore, it would be expecting too much to expect to find this, since it is not called for by the scope of the authors and, consequently, we should have to content ourselves with the fact that the Fathers and the whole Church guarantee the fulfillment of the prophecy in Mary, and that the prophecy says that the Virgin will conceive and give birth.<sup>37</sup> If the argument from apposition be valid, it should be enough. St Thomas apparently was satisfied with it when he wrote: “Without any doubt it must be asserted that the Mother of Christ was a virgin also in birth; for the prophet not only says Behold a virgin shall conceive; but also adds: And shall bear a son.”<sup>38</sup>

A second scriptural argument comes in question on account of the frequent use by the Fathers in reference to the virginity *in partu*, of the figures taken from the Old Testament, such as the closed door of Ezekiel 44, 1-2, the garden enclosed, and the sealed fountain of Canticles 4, 12. Opinion is divided as to the value of these texts as scriptural arguments. Some maintain their scriptural value in virtue of the typical sense intended by the principal author of Sacred Scripture.<sup>39</sup> Others, and they

<sup>36</sup> St Jerome, *Comment in Isaiam Prophetam*, lib 3; *P.L.* 24, 110

<sup>37</sup> Cornelius a Lapide, *Commentaria in Scripturam Sacram*, vol. 11 (Paris, 1866), p 194.

<sup>38</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, 3, 28, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. G Roschini, O S M, *Mariologia*, Tomus 2, pars I (Romae, 1947), pp. 125-137.

would seem to be in the majority, hold them to be mere accommodations of Scripture by the Fathers.<sup>40</sup>

Hence, in spite of the fact that the closed gate of Ezechiel is the scriptural term most used by the Fathers specifically in regard to the virginity *in partu*, we prefer not to allege these texts as scriptural arguments.

St Luke's statement that Mary wrapped the Child in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, has been taken by many of the Fathers and more recent authors as an indication and suggestion that Mary was not subject to the pains and usual infirmities of child-birth, and thus indirectly as a testimony to the virginity *in partu*. Consequently, it does not seem rash to assert that St. Luke had in mind the Virginal birth.<sup>41</sup>

Another scriptural indication of the teaching of the virginity *in partu* is seen in St Luke's account of the Presentation in the temple, where he cites the part of the law of Leviticus, 12, 8, which deals with the consecration of the child to God and omits the part about taking away the uncleanness of the mother. It would seem that he did this with the intention of teaching the virgin birth.<sup>42</sup>

#### IV

#### THE BELIEF OF THE EARLY CHURCH

If one takes a strictly historical approach in the study of the belief of the Early Church, the picture would come out somewhat like this. In the first two centuries there is no explicit patristic witness. Ignatius is not clear on the subject. Justin does not treat the problem, and the texts of Irenaeus

<sup>40</sup> A. Robert, *La sainte Vierge dans l'Ancien Testament*, in *Maria*, ed. H. du Manoir, vol. 1 (Paris, 1949), pp. 27-31.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. F. Ceuppens, O.P., *Theologia Biblica*, vol. 4, ed. 2 (Rome, 1951), p. 128.

<sup>42</sup> B. H. Merkelbach, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-243.

usually alleged are not perfectly clear. In the third century, Clement of Alexandria accepts the belief but attests that many hold the opposite. As to Origen's position, it is disputed whether he held the doctrine at all, or whether he first denied and later accepted the belief. Tertullian clearly denied it, as also the virginity *post partum*. In brief, at the end of the third century we are not much farther ahead than a century before.<sup>43</sup> The belief was even regarded with some uneasiness in regions where there was fear of Docetism and Manicheism.<sup>44</sup> In the fourth century the belief becomes clear-cut in Zeno of Verona, Ephraem of Syria, Gregory of Nyssa and Ambrose. Its denial is confronted by the Synod of Milan in 390 with the assertion that the virginity *in partu* is a truth contained in revelation and contained in the Apostles' Creed which has always been guarded inviolate by the Roman Church. In the fifth century the belief gradually becomes universal in East and West, especially after the Council of Ephesus, with Augustine, Jerome, Cyril of Alexandria, Leo the Great, Peter Chrysologus, Proclus, Theodoret of Cyr and Theodotus of Ancyra. The belief is set forth in the *Tome* of St. Leo to Flavian and thus receives acceptance by the Council of Chalcedon. It is henceforth in pacific possession.

What were the reasons for such a late development? The reasons seem to have been the fear of Docetism, in refutation of which Tertullian denied the virginity *in partu*; secondly, the unlikelihood of it being a topic for widespread Christian discussion, and particularly since the main preoccupation of Christians was the virginal conception which was regarded from the beginning as an article of faith.<sup>45</sup>

Perhaps the most general reason was the gradual growth of

<sup>43</sup> G. Jonassard, *art. cit.*, p. 82

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84

<sup>45</sup> W. Burghardt, *Mary in Western Patristic Thought*, in *Mariology*, ed. J. Carol, vol. 1 (Milwaukee, 1955), p. 120

appreciation of Mary's dignity as Mother of God with the sanctity and purity and entirely special privileges which that must involve. This was evident in the correspondingly slow progress of the dogma of the entire sinlessness of Mary, and even in the length of time required for the virginity *post partum* to acquire its status as a binding article of faith. In this respect the Council of Ephesus was of tremendous significance. The insight of Christian thought following the principle of the divine maternity under the guidance of the Holy Ghost slowly but surely perceived that the coherent plan of God's redemption called for the completion of Mary's virginity in conception, by her virginity *in partu* and *post partum*. This came to the fore at first in ascetic circles and then later flowered into the unanimous consent of pastors and faithful even before any solemn definition.<sup>46</sup>

Such is the historical outline. To fill in the lights and shadows let us rather follow a method of positive theology and work back from the stage of explicit to the dim and implicit beginnings. St. Leo the Great, in the *Tomus ad Flavianum* of 449, teaches the virginity of Mary *in partu* as a truth to be believed by all the faithful: "who brought him forth without loss of virginity just as she conceived him without loss of virginity."<sup>47</sup> He explicitly mentions the preservation of the *claustrum pudoris* by the power of the Holy Ghost,<sup>48</sup> and uses the standard triple formula: *quod virgo conceperit, quod virgo pepererit et virgo permanserit*.<sup>49</sup>

St. Peter Chrysologus likewise uses the triple formula<sup>50</sup> and teaches that the virginal portal of the womb was never opened, realizing the Scriptures of the garden enclosed and

<sup>46</sup> G. Jouassard, *art. cit.*, p. 152.

<sup>47</sup> St. Leo, *Epist.* 28; *P.L.* 54, 759.

<sup>48</sup> St. Leo, *Serm.* 22, c. 2; *P.L.* 54, 196.

<sup>49</sup> St. Leo, *Serm.* 22, c. 2; *P.L.* 54, 195.

<sup>50</sup> St. Peter Chrysologus, *Serm.* 28; *P.L.* 52, 521.



the sealed fountain.<sup>51</sup> Mary, in fact, by parturition made further conquest of the crown of virginity.<sup>52</sup>

St. Cyril of Alexandria, in his Commentary on Luke 2, 5, utilizes the prophecy of Ezechiel to stress that the portal of the womb remained closed, and expressly states that Christ, the Word, "*absque semine prorsus conceptum, sine ulla item corruptione natum est.*"<sup>53</sup>

St. Proclus, Archbishop of Constantinople (d 446), comparing the birth of Jesus with the entrance through the closed doors after the Resurrection,<sup>54</sup> emphasizes that the *claustrum virginitatis* was not broken and interprets in that sense the prophecy of Ezechiel and Isaias 7, 14<sup>55</sup>

St. Augustine is one of the strongest witnesses, noting that we must believe that the Infant came forth from the virginal womb leaving the virginity of His Mother uninjured.<sup>56</sup> He repeats the triple formula of the dogma several times.<sup>57</sup>

St. Ambrose, in addition to his testimony in the Synod of Milan, testifies to the integrity of the seals of virginity; "*genitalis tamen septum pudoris et intemerata virginitatis conservavit signacula.*"<sup>58</sup> He applies to this mystery the words of Ezechiel 44, 2<sup>59</sup> He repeatedly affirms that the womb was not opened but remained closed and its portals remained intact.<sup>60</sup>

The cumulative value of such texts, which post-date the Jovinian controversy, along with the firmness of Ambrose's

<sup>51</sup> St. Peter Chrysologus, *Serm* 145; *P L* 52, 589

<sup>52</sup> St. Peter Chrysologus, *Serm* 175, *P L* 52, 658

<sup>53</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comment in Lucam*, c. 2, *P L*, 73, 486

<sup>54</sup> Proclus, *Orat* 1, 2; *P G*, 65, 684

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, *P G* 65, 692

<sup>56</sup> St. Augustine, *Serm* 191, *P L* 38, 1010

<sup>57</sup> St. Augustine, *Serm* 186, 190, 196, *P L* 38, 999, 1008, 1019

<sup>58</sup> St. Ambrose, *Epist* 63 *ad ecclesiam vercellensem*, *P L* 16, 1249

<sup>59</sup> St. Ambrose, *De institutione virginis*, 8, 54, *P L* 16, 320

<sup>60</sup> St. Ambrose, *De institutione virginis*, 8, 52; *P L* 15, 334

stand from the very outset of the heresy, seem to offer a sufficient guide to the interpretation of his statement in his commentary on Luke from the years 385-387: "*Hic ergo solus aperuit sibi vulvam . . . hic est qui aperuit matris suae vulvam ut immaculatus exiret.*"<sup>61</sup> It is the unembarrassed use of the term "opening the womb" to signify merely birth. This was usual with the Fathers of the 4th and 5th centuries who use the term *aperuit* and explain it, whereas in the 6th century they carefully avoid it and expressly deny the opening of the womb of Mary, as for example, Gregory the Great.<sup>62</sup>

St. Jerome, at the end of his career, gave sufficient evidence of his acceptance of the virginity *in partu*, though in his earlier work *Adversus Jovinianum* he passed over the doctrine quickly, hardly touching it, and in the still earlier *Adversus Helvidium* there is some question of his denying it.

In his dialogue *Adversus Pelagianos*, written in 415, he wrote. "*Solus enim Christus clausas portas vulvae virginalis aperuit, quae tamen clausae iugiter permanserunt. Haec est porta orientalis clausa, per quam solus Pontifex ingreditur et egreditur, et nihilominus semper clausa est.*"<sup>63</sup> This was Jerome's final word on the virginity *in partu*.

The same doctrine of the *porta clausa* in connection with the virgin birth is touched upon also in the commentaries on Ezechiel and Isaias<sup>64</sup> but with a certain aloofness, and we never seem to encounter the triple formula used by Jerome's contemporaries.

In the letter to Pammachius, of 339, St. Jerome used several scriptural symbols to illustrate the perpetual virginity of Mary, such as the closed door and the garden enclosed, and he concludes with the challenge: "Let them tell me how Jesus

<sup>61</sup> St Ambrose, *Expositio Evang. sec. Lucam*, lib. 2, 57, P.L. 15, 1655

<sup>62</sup> Cf E Dublanchy, *art. cit.*, in *D.T.C.*, vol 9, col 2374.

<sup>63</sup> St Jerome, *Dialogus contra Pelagianos*, lib. 2; P.L. 23, 563.

<sup>64</sup> St Jerome, *Comment in Ezechielem*, lib. 13, c 44, P.L. 25, 430

entered with the doors closed and I will answer how Mary is virgin and mother" <sup>65</sup>

In Jerome's *Adversus Helvidium*, of 383, he had in a hypothetical and hyperbolical passage defended the perpetual virginity of Mary against the objection of the unseemliness of a God coming forth through the bodily channels of birth. He enumerates all the ordinary unpleasant circumstances of parturition in a manner reminiscent of Tertullian and pronounces them to be nothing in comparison with the scandal of the Cross.<sup>66</sup> Some take this to mean that at that date Jerome presented the birth of Christ as taking place in an ordinary manner. However, considering the date of this writing, the clearness of St. Jerome's last writing on the subject, the literary style of the passage, and the fact that virginity *in partu* was not there the point at issue, it would seem that the most that can be said, is that at that time St. Jerome's thought was not yet fixed. Probably not even that has to be said, since perhaps the passage was meant by him merely in the sense of a hyperbolical *dato non concesso* form of argument, as St. Ildephonsus later interpreted it.<sup>67</sup>

Zeno of Verona, who died in 380 (?), is one of the earliest explicit witnesses in the West, and perhaps represents a link with the faith of the Church of Milan in the next generation. He seems to be the first to use the triple formula of the dogma, "*Maria virgo incorrupta concepit, post conceptum virgo peperit, post partum virgo permansit.*" <sup>68</sup>

Contemporary with Zeno but in the Church of Syria, we have the teaching of St. Ephraem. It is remarkable for its richness and particularly for the very concrete nature of the testimony. Apparently much critical work remains to be

<sup>65</sup> St. Jerome, *Epist.* 48, *P.L.* 22, 510

<sup>66</sup> St. Jerome, *De perpetua virginitate B. Mariae liber*; *P.L.* 23, 212

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *P.L.* 11, 303, 314, 415

<sup>68</sup> Zeno of Verona, *Tractatus*, hb. 1, tr. 5, 3, hb. 2, tr. 8, 2; *P.L.* 11, 303, 314.

done in regard to the separation of the genuine works of Ephraem from those of his disciples which have passed under his name. However, Krüger, in a recent study, states that we are in a position to offer sufficient genuine texts in regard to the question of virginity.<sup>69</sup>

It is on the basis of this assurance that we offer the texts of Ephraem, in spite of Jouassard's warning in the matter.<sup>70</sup>

Ephraem sees in the virginity of Mary the root, the inner essence of her religious personality. It is the Alpha and Omega of Mariology. With abundant repetition, Ephraem mentions that the seals of virginity remained intact in the birth of our Lord, that the *virginalia* remained integral, that the signs of virginity remained.<sup>71</sup> In Mary's childbearing there were no labor pains.<sup>72</sup> There is even exclusion of any puerperal flow in connection with the birth.<sup>73</sup> Mary's womb escaped from the labor pains resulting from original sin.<sup>74</sup> Ephraem asserts

<sup>69</sup> Paul Krüger, *Die somatische Virginität der Gottesmutter*, in *Alma Socia Christi*, vol. 5, fasc. 1 (Rome, 1952), pp. 46-86.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. G. Jouassard, *art. cit.*, p. 88, n. 9.

<sup>71</sup> "Sigillo virgineo munita est et integra." *Hymnus de beata Maria* 11, 2, in *S. Ephraemi Syri hymni et sermones*, ed. T. I. Lamy, vol. 2 (Malines, 1886), 567/568. Henceforth cited as: Lamy. Cf. P. Krüger, *art. cit.*, p. 57. "Portat natum et remanet ejus virginitas, portat virginalia integra. . . . Portat puerulum in sinu suo et signa virginitatis servat . . . ex ventre porro exiens, non solvit sigilla virginalia sicut nec solvit exeundo sigilla sepulchri." *Hymnus* 11, 3, 4, 6, in Lamy 2, 567/570. Cf. P. Krüger, *art. cit.*, p. 57. "Ecce facta est mater, servata virginitate et sigillis non solutis, gestat in utero factum integris virginalibus." *Hymnus* 18, 20, in Lamy 2, 611/612. Cf. P. Krüger, *art. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>72</sup> ". . . absque difficultate natus." *Hymnus de oleo ac oliva*, in Lamy 2, 573/574. Cf. Krüger, *art. cit.*, p. 71. "Quia habitavit in filia Davidis et in ea absque semine et doloribus factus es homo." *Hymnus de beata Maria*, 18, 5, in Lamy 2, 605/606. Cf. P. Krüger, *art. cit.*, pp. 71-72. "Tuus sinus aufugit a doloribus maledictionis; per serpentem intrarunt dolores mulieris. Confundatur erubescens (satanas) immundus videns mala quae est attulerat, nequaquam in tuo sinu inveniri." From *S. Ephraemi hymni de virginitate*, ed. I. E. Rahmani (Scharfe, 1906), pp. 69/70. Cited in P. Krüger, *art. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>73</sup> "Natus es absque fluxu. . . ." *Hymnus* 10, 2, in Lamy 2, 553/554. Cited in P. Krüger, *art. cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>74</sup> P. Krüger, *art. cit.*, p. 72. Cf. supra, note 72.

that Mary's corporal virginity remained intact until her death.<sup>75</sup>

It may not be out of place to conclude the doctrine of Ephraem with the reconstructed fragment from his commentary on the *Diatessaron*: "And yet how could it be that she, who was the dwelling and habitation of the Spirit, and whom the power of God overshadowed, should afterwards become the wife of a mortal man, and in conformity with the primeval curse bring forth in pain? For since Mary is blessed among women, through her was revoked that original malediction by which children are born in pain and accursed. But just as the Lord entered the Cenacle although the doors were closed, so in the same way did He come forth from the virginal womb. For this Virgin, without experiencing the pains of childbirth really and truly gave birth."<sup>76</sup>

When we push our inquiry to the time of Origen and Tertullian, the light becomes much dimmer in the history of our dogma. It is very questionable whether Origen can be alleged as a witness to the virginity *in partu*, though he did champion the virginity *post partum*, at least as his own conviction.<sup>77</sup>

It seems that he was not unacquainted with the idea and touched on it in his commentary on Titus but rather in the sense of rejecting it.<sup>78</sup> Jouassard says that nowhere else in his certainly authentic works did he manifest different sentiments.<sup>79</sup> In the Latin translation of his commentary on Levi-

<sup>75</sup> " . Mortua est et virginalia ejus non fuerunt dissoluta " *Hymnus* 15, 2, in Lamy 2, 583/584. Cf. Kruger, *art. cit.*, p. 83; "et in virginalibus suis mortua est." Lamy 2, 583, note c, cited in P. Kruger, *art. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>76</sup> Fragment from the commentary of Ephraem on the *Diatessaron* of Tatian, as reconstructed by Mosinger (Venice, 1876), pp. 23-24, as reproduced by J. Rendel Harris in *Fragments of the Commentary of Ephraem Syrus upon the Diatessaron* (London, 1895), pp. 31-32, cited by P. Palmer, *Mary in the Documents of the Church* (Westminster, Md., 1952), p. 23.

<sup>77</sup> G. Jouassard, *art. cit.*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

ticus, he says: "It is said of Mary that a virgin conceived and gave birth" He shows that Mary is called a woman by St. Paul in Gal. 4,4, "not on account of the destruction of integrity but as an indication of her sex" He states the law of Leviticus concerning purification does not apply to Mary because of her childbearing, since it was not the result of conception from the seed but from the Holy Ghost and the power of the Most High.<sup>80</sup> However, some years earlier in his Homilies on St. Luke, Origen had admitted Mary's need of purification and affirmed the opening of her womb at the time of birth.<sup>81</sup> Neubert was of the opinion that Origen affirmed the virginity in the commentary on Luke.<sup>82</sup> Jouassard, however, will not accept this and suspects that the change is due to the touch of the translator, Rufinus, rather than to any change of opinion on the part of Origen.<sup>83</sup>

Tertullian denied the virginity *in partu* and did so explicitly "She was a virgin, so far as her husband was concerned; she was not a virgin, so far as her childbearing was concerned" <sup>84</sup> "If she was a virgin when she conceived, in her childbearing she was a wife." <sup>85</sup> What is the force of Tertullian's denial? Tertullian defended the virginity in conception but denied the virginity *in partu* and *post partum*. St. Jerome conceded this fact forthwith to Helvidius on the ground that Tertullian at the time of his denial was no longer a member of the Church Whether Tertullian can with justice be dismissed that easily, seems to be an arguable matter.<sup>86</sup> There is perhaps something to be said for the state of development of the dogma at that time. Tertullian in his denial never claims

<sup>80</sup> Origen, *In Lev*, hom 8, P G. 12, 493.

<sup>81</sup> Origen, *In Luc*, hom 14, P G 13, 1836.

<sup>82</sup> E. Neubert, *Marie dans l'Eglise antenicéenne* (Paris, 1908), p 184

<sup>83</sup> G. Jouassard, *art. cit*, p 81, n. 13

<sup>84</sup> Tertullian, *Liber de carne Christi*, c 23, P.L. 2, 835.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>86</sup> W. Burghardt, *art cit*, pp 127-128

ecclesiastical tradition in his favor, but neither does he seem conscious of contradicting a teaching of the Church recognized as such.<sup>87</sup> There is no evidence of his denial causing scandal in the Church of Africa at that period, nor any record of a reaction by the Church against it. The argument itself was directed against the Docetes

The predecessor of Origen, Clement of Alexandria, attests in the *Stromata* to Mary's virginity *in partu* though with allusion to the legend of the *Protoevangelium of James*.<sup>88</sup> However, he recognizes that many hold the contrary. His protest against this, though firm, does not seem to be on the basis of obligatory faith.

Toward the end of the second century, Irenaeus wrote, in his *Adversus Haereses*, the famous phrase: "Filius Dei filius hominis. purus pure puram aperiens vulvam" <sup>89</sup> It is perhaps not entirely clear that the adverb "pure" is the equivalent of virginally. However, the three words do form a homogeneous block and the first and third words clearly involve the supernatural in the thought of Irenaeus. Should not the middle word likewise? <sup>90</sup> It would seem, therefore, that there may well be a reference or even an attestation of the permanence of the seal of virginity and miraculous passage of the body of our Saviour in the text. There is a further indication in Irenaeus' later *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, where he interprets Isaias 66,7, of the birth of Christ: "Also concerning His birth, the same prophet says in another place. 'Before she who was in labour brought forth and before the pains of labor came, there came forth delivered a man child; he proclaimed His unlooked-for and extraordinary birth of the Virgin' " <sup>91</sup> More-

<sup>87</sup> G. Jouassard, *art cit*, p. 78

<sup>88</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1, 7, c. 16, *PG* 9, 530

<sup>89</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 1, 4, c. 33, n. 11, *PG* 7, 1080

<sup>90</sup> A. d'Alès, *art Marie, Mère de Dieu*, in *D.A.F.C.*, vol. 3, col. 201

<sup>91</sup> Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, 54, tr. by J. P. Smith, in

over, in spite of the efforts of Turmel and Hugo Koch, no text of Irenaeus which contradicts the virginity *in partu* has yet been made to stand up under examination<sup>92</sup>

For the period from Irenaeus back to Ignatius, some mention should be made of the Apocrypha. Whether the *Proto-evangelium of James* is infected with Docetism or not,<sup>93</sup> it does give us evidence that the idea of the virginity *in partu* was in popular circulation around the middle of the second century.<sup>94</sup> We find there the legend of the certification of Mary's virginity *in partu* by the inspection of a midwife, and a miracle wrought in confirmation of it. In another early apocryphal work, *The Odes of Solomon*, which probably dates from about 150 A.D.,<sup>95</sup> there is a reference which omits the midwife: "The womb of the Virgin took (it) and she received conception and brought forth: And the Virgin became a mother with great mercy. And she travailed and brought forth a Son without incurring pain. And it did not happen without purpose and she did not require a midwife, for He delivered her. And she brought forth, as a man, of her own will."<sup>96</sup>

A third reference from the Apocrypha is found in the *Vision of Isaias*, which is perhaps to be dated around the end of the first century.<sup>97</sup> "and after two months of days while Joseph was in the house and Mary his wife, but both alone, it came to pass that when they were alone, that Mary straightway looked with her eyes and saw a small babe, and she was

*Ancient Christian Writers*, ed. Quasten-Plumpe, vol. 16 (Westminster, Md., 1952), p. 83

<sup>92</sup> W. Burghardt, *art. cit.* pp. 121-122.

<sup>93</sup> A. d'Alès, *art. cit.*, col. 202.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. A. Rush, *Mary in the Apocrypha of the New Testament*, in *Mariology*, ed. J. Carol, vol. 1 (Milwaukee, 1955), p. 157.

<sup>95</sup> Joseph C. Plumpe, *Some Little-Known Early Witnesses to Mary's Virginity "in Partu,"* in *Theological Studies*, vol. 9 (1948), p. 576.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 575.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 574.



astonied And after she had been astonished, her womb was found as formerly before she had conceived."<sup>98</sup> This text has given rise widely to the assumption of Docetism on the part of the author. That assumption, however, is debatable.<sup>99</sup> At any rate the text does make the point on the virginity *in partu*.

Let us take these documents for what they are worth. They are not patristic teachings but attempts of Christian piety to embroider the Christian beliefs of the time, often with legendary and miraculous details, in order to fill in the gaps in the revealed data. But let us not take away from them their value, at least historically, as evidences of the thoughts, or trends of Christian piety in those times. It is in this sense that we think we can do no better than to quote the conclusion of Fr. Plumpe in this regard: "In these documents, then, all of them very probably originating with orthodox Christians, we have witnesses for the time of Ignatius of Antioch, and quite likely even for a decade or so preceding the writing of his letters. They offer a full commentary and illustration of his claim that the Saviour was really born *ek parthenou*. They remove every vestige of doubt that this *ek parthenou* was meant to convey that she who had been a virgin *ante partum*, remained such *in partu*. For the time between Ignatius and Origen they constitute a formidable chain of witnesses to this *permanens virginitas*, while also lending certitude to the indications in Justin Martyr and Irenaeus of Lyons that they likewise regarded the Mother of God as *aieparthenos*."<sup>100</sup>

Let us call attention to the remarkable explicitness of the doctrine of the virgin birth in the *Odes of Solomon*. It called forth from the editors, Harris and Mingana, the observation: "The second part appears to present the doctrine of the Virgin Birth in a highly evolved form, as for instance, Virgin Birth,

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, p. 573

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, p. 573

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, p. 577.

plus painlessness, plus non-necessity of a midwife." Considering this and the date and place of origin, placed by Harris and Mingana at Antioch in Syria, it is not too surprising that the editors find "a considerable number of coincidences between the language of the unknown odist and that of Ignatius of Antioch."<sup>101</sup> They conclude that Ignatius knew the Odes; in fact almost to the quotation of them by Ignatius.<sup>102</sup>

It is perhaps best against that background that we may present the testimony of Ignatius that Jesus was "truly born of a virgin,"<sup>103</sup> as had been foretold by Isaias the prophet<sup>104</sup> and fulfilled in the Gospel.<sup>105</sup> Secondly, there is the testimony of his letter to the Ephesians: "And the Prince of this world was in ignorance of the virginity of Mary and her childbearing and also of the death of the Lord . . . three mysteries loudly proclaimed to the world, though accomplished in the stillness of God."<sup>106</sup> This last phrase, often quoted by the Fathers,<sup>107</sup> puts the birth on a plane with the other two mysteries and would seem to give some probability to its being a reference to the virginity *in partu*. D'Alès calls attention to the point that the birth here is considered on the part of the mother, *o toketos autes*. The argument is somewhat strengthened by further parallels in Ignatius between conception and birth,<sup>108</sup> and between birth, death and resurrection.<sup>109</sup>

If so, then in spite of the fact that the early Fathers spoke with apparent diffidence of the virginity *in partu* on

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 574.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 574.

<sup>103</sup> M. J. Rouët de Journal, *Enchiridion Patristicum* (Fribourg, 1937), no.

62.

<sup>104</sup> Isaias 7, 14.

<sup>105</sup> Matthew 1, 22-23.

<sup>106</sup> Ignatius, *To the Ephesians* 19, 1, tr. by J. A. Kleist, in *Ancient Christian Writers*, ed. Quasten-Plumpe, vol. 1 (Westminster, Md., 1946), p. 67.

<sup>107</sup> J. Plumpe, *art. cit.*, p. 574.

<sup>108</sup> Ignatius, *op. cit.*, 18, 2, in *loc. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>109</sup> Ignatius, *To the Magnesians* 11, in *loc. cit.*, pp. 72-73.

account of the danger of Docetism, the testimony of Ignatius is not without weight. Perhaps no more than conjectural value can be allowed to Augustine's conclusion that the formula in the creed "born of the Virgin Mary," would not be true except in the hypothesis of the virginity *in partu*.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless the background of the Apocrypha and the other passages of Ignatius seem to give some basis for the view that in the mind and expression of Ignatius, the formula was comprehensive enough to include not only the virginity in conception but in birth as well. If so, it throws some light on Ambrose's claim almost three centuries later that the Apostles' Creed which the Roman Church ever guards and preserves inviolate, includes in its formula "Natus ex Maria Virgine," the virginity *in partu*, and that Isaias 7, 14, means not only virginity in conception but in birth as well.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Cf W. Burghardt, *art. cit.*, p 120

<sup>111</sup> Ambrose, *Epist*, 42, 4 sq.; *P.L.* 16, 1125 sq