

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF VIRGIN MARY PATRON OF PHARMACISTS IN SPAIN: A THEORY TO EXPLAIN THIS PATRONAGE.

Ramos Carrillo, A & Moreno Toral, E

Dpto. de Farmacia y Tec. Farmacéutica, F. Farmacia, c/ P. García González 2, 41012, Seville, Spain.

antonioramos@us.es

toral@us.es

The Immaculate Conception is the saint patron of the pharmacists [Figure I]. It is our intention to find the link between these health professionals and their patron in the city of Seville, Andalusia, south of Spain, known for historically being connected with this religious tradition.

Holy Week fraternities in this city have always expressed their devotion to the symbol of the Immaculate. For example, the fraternity of “Silencio” (Silence), aka “Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno Santa Cruz en Jerusalén y María Santísima de la Concepción”, celebrates their “conceptionist vote”, which consists of a sworn-in act where fraternity brothers put one hand on the Bible and the other one on the fraternity’s “Banner and White Flag” while they proclaim the following vow: “Thus I believe, thus I pledge, thus I hope” (*Así lo creo, así lo prometo, así lo espero*); and after they have accepted that “with my vow and oath to believe, confess and defend the Blessed Virgin Mother of God [...] who was preserved of the original sin that we all incur at birth” (*con voto y juramento a creer, confesar y defender que la Santísima Virgen Madre de Dios [...] fue preservada de la culpa original que todos contraemos al nacer*)(1).

Due to the little documentary information available, it is complex and risky to investigate the past history of the pharmaceutical profession, its ceremonies and values. For this study, we have chosen the Franciscan Order because, according to P. Ángel Ortega “Franciscans occupy a central place in the great struggles and great defense of Mary Immaculate. Furthermore, they led the move which, having one single goal, took one particular aspect, one particular hue...” ([...]“*los franciscanos ocupan lugar preferente en las grandes luchas y en las brillantes defensas de María Inmaculada, más; lleva la dirección de aquel movimiento que teniendo un solo objetivo, reviste en cada siglo un aspecto, un matiz particular...*”)(2).

We try, therefore, to connect two facts. On the one hand, the belief that Mary was free from all sin, and, on the other hand, its relationship with Pharmacy. We believe that we place this study within the appropriate geographical framework considering the religious enthusiasm for the Baroque movement in this Spanish region, even though this devotion to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is not exclusive of the south of Spain.

It is well known that December 8th, 1854, Pope Pius IX proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception with the *Bull Ineffabilis Deus*, although its exact origin is lost in the passage of time between antiquity and the Middle Ages.

“We declare, pronounce and define that the doctrine which asserts that the Blessed Virgin Mary, from the first moment of Her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God, and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, was preserved free from every stain of original sin is a doctrine revealed by God and, for this reason, must be firmly and constantly believed by all the faithful”(3).

Nevertheless, in the 1830s, the Roman Curia itself had already celebrated a Mass on December 8th, a day dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. Then in 1497, the Sorbonne University provided the requirement of celebrating a sworn-in act to proclaim the defence of the Immaculate Conception of Mary prior to any degree completion. This circumstance would be followed thirty-three years later by the University of Valencia, Spain. In any case, controversy continued during the Renaissance.

In any case, even though Cordova (south of Spain) was already celebrating the feast in honour of the Immaculate Conception since 1350, possibly even before, the struggles in Seville between the maculate Dominicans against the devoted immaculate Franciscans as early as 1350, remained a constant in the following centuries.

The process started and developed during the archbishopric of Don Pedro de Castro (1601-

1623). This is an unusual occurrence since it was a discussion between schools, with two opposing views: the Jesuits and Franciscans as advocates of the Conception on one side, and the Dominicans on the opposite side (4)(5).

It was a fight that occurred in several Spanish cities, but among them Seville led the controversy by bringing the case to the Court. The conflict began with the preaching of an anti-conceptionist sermon by a Dominican friar on Christmas 1614, or early 1615. Thus, the Dominican Fray Cristobal de Torres delivered a sermon at the Cathedral of Cordova in which he openly spoke against the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. That was not a heretical view at the time, because the dogma was defined in 1854, but the scandal erupted in the city. The controversy about the Conception of Mary opened the confrontation between Franciscans and Dominicans: the former were immaculate defenders from John Duns Scotus (1266-1308), while the latter had the opposite belief supported by St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).

The spark triggered in Cordova, but the blaze broke out in Seville, for the Giralda city was a major defender of the immaculate belief in those years.

The leaders of the conceptionist party were the Canonigo Mateo Vázquez de Leca, Arcediano de Carmona, and Bernardo de Toro, priest and preacher of the Sacred Tabernacle. They were later joined by Miguel Cid, who wrote the music and lyrics of the verses that later on became the anthem of the "Marian war". In January 1615 these jingles were specially popular in the city. The couplet reads: "Although Molina strives/ And the friars of Regina / With His Reverend Father / The Virgin was conceived / Without original sin".

The leader of the Dominican side was Fray Domingo de Molina, rector of the convent of Regina. Given the popularity the conceptionist ideas were gaining, on February 9th 1615, the Dominicans presented their theological conclusions that were banned by Archbishop D. Pedro de Castro as an attempt to prevent further turmoil. Popular fervour raised as theological discussion continued. Children would sing the popular jingles, while the Dominicans responded with invective preaches against the mystery. In March 1615, a lampoon against the two main proponents of the Immaculate was published on the Door of Forgiveness in the Cathedral.

In the "Reasoning", which Toro Vazquez de Leca presented to the king on August 29th, 1615, the conceptionists showed their position towards the offensive attitude of the Dominicans. Despite the vicissitudes of the controversy, his prestige remained untouched as he was appointed procurator of the religious orders in Rome in 1624. His task as a procurator was related with the revocation of a bull by Pope Gregory XV.

Over the years, the balance went in favour of the many advocates of the immaculate belief: common people, kings, nobility, universities, fraternities, councils and monastic orders. The Dominican order remained as the only detractor. The Jesuit Juan de Pineda developed the theological arguments of the Immaculate dogma and was followed by other preachers whose sermons flooded churches in the coming months. The Dominicans felt themselves obliged to follow the tenets of Thomas Aquinas.

For five years there existed an acute theological confrontation that had a wide and bitter social manifestation, and although the issue would not be closed, it became calmer in the following decades. Very important was Mateo Vázquez de Leca's successful trip to the Court. Vázquez de Leca was archdeacon of Carmona, and on this visit he was accompanied by the lawyer Bernardo de Toro and the Franciscan Francisco de Santiago. They were sent by Don Pedro de Castro to defend the pure and clean conception of Mary.

In addition, the views of universities, especially when dealing with doctrinal issues, were very important. The University of Seville was probably one of the most influential ones in the XVII century, albeit not being the only one. This university decided to solemnly defend the conceptionist doctrine on January 30th, 1617. The festivity was celebrated on a Sunday mass in the morning while the oath ceremony was presided by the Auxiliary Bishop of Sevilla D Juan de la Sal and his assistant Count of Salvatierra in the afternoon. The bishop swore first to the Rector and then took it to the other doctors in order of seniority. Henceforth, the conceptionist oath was always pronounced at every graduation ceremony, although the text to be read was reduced from its original format to the one below:

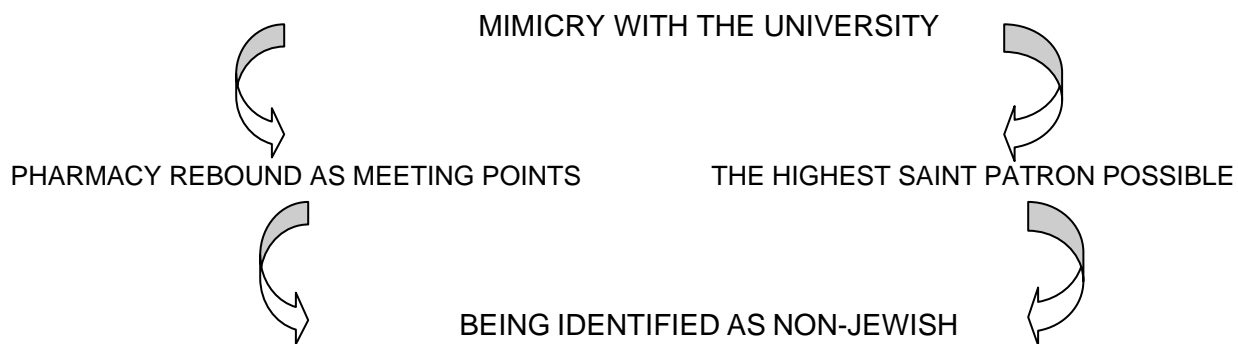
"Similiter iuro et promito me perpetuo dicturum et defensurum sacratissimam genitricem dei mariam, numquam originalem peccatum habuisse se dab instanti suae conceptionis fuisse ab illo immunem, ae proinde sempter immaculatam, ac purissimam extitisse" (6).

This event had undoubtedly a major impact in all of the conceptionist events that followed on in Spain during the following years. From here, for example, it soon followed the solemn oath of defense of the conceptionist doctrine by pharmaceutical collegiates.

The ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1625 created an Institution called the Colegio Boticarios de San José of Seville, whose members had to swear the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (7). Later, in the Ordinances of the Pharmacist Association of Seville of 1744, about the admission of new members, it literally reads: "In General Meeting [the pretender] has to oath to defend the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, Mother of God and our Lord" (8).

With all these data, we speculate that the pharmacies, as meeting points for the general public and for more educated people likewise, may have served as a transmission foci for conceptionist ideas and beliefs. Universities may have had special influence on this spread of the doctrine, with a clear impact on graduate pharmacists. Other reasons could be social, as the desired not to be related with the Jewish religion. Besides, what better and higher saint patron could have been chosen for the pharmacists?

With this preliminary study, we would like to lay the foundations for a more complex research that can help us understand the final outcome of the adoption of the Immaculate Conception as the saint patron of the apothecaries. Even though the documentation is spare, our hypothesis lies in 4 assumptions: mimicry with the university, pharmacy rebound as a meeting point, social identification as being non-Jewish and the Immaculate Conception as the highest saint patron possible.



[Figure I]

LA INMACULADA, BARTOLOMÉ ESTEBAN MURILLO (1618-1682) Escuela Española. Barroco. Siglo XVII.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- (1) <http://www.hermandaddeelsilencio.org/>
- (2) Ortega, Fray P. Ángel (OFM) La tradición concepcionista en Sevilla. Siglos XVI-XVII. Notas histórica-críticas, con motivo de un proyecto de Monumento a la Inmaculada Concepción de esta ciudad. Sevilla (1917).
- (3) Pope Pius IX, *Bull Ineffabilis*, 8 December (1854).
- (4) Ollero Pina, José Antonio: «*Sine labe concepta*: conflictos eclesiásticos e ideológicos en la Sevilla de principios del siglo XVII», Carlos A. González Sánchez y Enriqueta Vila Vilar (comp.), *Grañas del imaginario. Representaciones culturales en España y América (siglos XVI-XVIII)*, México, FCE, (2003), 301-335.
- (5) Cortés Peña, A.L: «*Andalucía y la Inmaculada Concepción en el siglo XVII*», en José Alcalá-Zamora y Ernest Belenguer (Coords.), *Calderón de la Barca y la España del Barroco*, 2 vols., Madrid, Centro de Estudios Constitucionales (2001), 401-428.
- (6) Odilio Gómez, P: Juramentos Concepcionistas de las Universidades Españolas en el Siglo XVII. Archivo Ibero-Americano, Segunda época, Año XV-Tomo XV (1955).
- (7) López Díaz, M^a.T.: «*La profesión farmacéutica en Sevilla durante el siglo XVII*», Directorio de Boticarios de 1625. Edición facsímil. Sevilla, Padilla Ed (1991), XV.
- (8) Ordenanzas del Colegio de Boticarios de Sevilla (1744). Fundación Farmacéutica Avenzoar, Sevilla (1996).