The condemnation of Pope Honorius

by

Chapman, John, 1865-1933

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The Condemnation of Pope Honorius
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By
DOM JOHN CHAPMAN, O.S.B.

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## Contents

| §1. The Point of the Difficulty | 7 |
| §2. The Beginnings of the Heresy | 10 |
| §3. The Letter of Honorius | 13 |
| §4. St. Sophronius of Jerusalem Intervenes | 17 |
| §5. The "Ecthesis" of Heraclius | 24 |
| §6. The Apology of John IV | 29 |
| §7. The Recantation of Pyrrhus | 32 |
| §8. The Condemnation of Paul, and the Relapse of Pyrrhus | 37 |
| §9. The "Typus" of Constans and Paul | 43 |
| §10. St. Martin's Lateran Council of 649 | 49 |
| §11. Publication of the Lateran Decree | 56 |
| §12. Persecution and Martyrdom of the Pope | 58 |
| §13. The Trial of St. Maximus at Constantinople | 61 |
| §14. Exile and Death of St. Maximus and His Companions | 65 |
| §15. The Convocation of the Sixth Ecumenical Council | 72 |
CONTENTS

§ 16. The Letter of Pope Agatho to the Sixth Council . . . 76
§ 17. The Pope gives his orders to the Council . . . . . . 81
§ 18. The Council deposes Macarius of Antioch . . . . . . 86
§ 19. Pope Honorious is condemned as a Heretic . . . . . . 90
§ 20. The Council's Formal Decree accepting the Pope's Letter as he had demanded . . . . . . 95
§ 21. The Council describes the Pope's Authority . . . . . . 98
§ 22. The Emperor describes the Prerogatives of Rome . . . . 103
§ 23. Papal Infallibility and the Sixth Council . . . . . . 108
§ 24. The Condemnation of Pope Honorious is confirmed by numerous Pontiffs and by two Ecumenical Councils . . . . . . 112
The Condemnation of Pope Honorius

§ I. The Point of the Difficulty.

Much ink has been spilt in the cause of Pope Honorius. Some writers have been chiefly occupied in defending or assailing the authenticity of the documents, others in attacking or supporting the orthodoxy of Honorius. But the inner sequence of events as described in the following sketch has never been given in all this voluminous literature.

Though it will, I hope, be made clear in these pages that much has been misunderstood or only half understood, yet the work of so many distinguished writers has no inconsiderable value. Certainty has been attained on some points. The authenticity of the documents is now above suspicion. It has been made clear that Honorius' meaning was far better than his expression, and that his real mind was confused rather than unorthodox.
This is not, however, a very important point, since at the present day no one is likely to teach that Honorius published his famous letters *ex cathedra*. The real difficulty has been worded with admirable precision by Bishop Gore in his *Roman Catholic Claims*. He says:—

"Once again, whatever strong language may be quoted from a few later Oriental writers on behalf of the Roman See, as from St. Theodore the Studite in the 8th century, nothing can override the evidence of the formal action of the sixth General Council in 680, when it condemned Honorius the Pope among the Monothelite heretics. 'With them we anathematize,' says the Council, 'and cast out of the Catholic Church, Honorius, who was Pope of the elder Rome, because we found that he followed Sergius' opinion in all respects and confirmed his impious dogmas.' Roman Catholic writers may endeavour to justify the actual language of Honorius, they may protest that the contemporary Pope never intended to assent to his condemnation except for negligence in opposing heresy—we are not concerned at present with these contentions—but no one can possibly, with any show of reason, contend that the insertion of the name of the Pope in a list of formal heretics by an
œcumenical Council does not prove that the Bishops who composed the Council had no, even rudimentary, idea of the papal infallibility" (pp. 103, 104).

As the history of Pope Honorius has been written up till now by Catholic apologists, this indictment is unanswerable. Bishop Gore's admission with regard to St. Theodore the Studite might have suggested to him that his conclusion was not certain, had not so many Catholic writers made it seem that the Council in condemning Honorius was resisting the Pope of its own day, and that the latter explained away a decision which he was afraid of refusing to confirm.

In reality, as the history will appear from the original documents, there is no difficulty at all. The Pope and the Council were in agreement as to the necessity of condemning Honorius, and they were certainly right in doing so under the circumstances.

It will also be made clear that there was no difference between Rome and the East with regard to the force of papal decisions. We do not of course look for the enunciation of the Vatican decree in set words by Eastern Bishops of the 7th century. But evidence will be supplied to enable us to judge the degree
of development which the doctrine of papal infallibility had reached in those times, and the whole history will stand out as an interesting and curious page in the history of the evolution of the dogma. I shall avoid controversy either with Catholics, Gallicans, or Protestants. The facts will best speak for themselves, and I leave the comparison with the views of former writers to be made or not by the reader as he chooses, so as to avoid burdening these pages with tiresome arguments.

§ 2. The Beginnings of the Heresy.

The origin of Monothelitism is thus told by Sergius.¹ The Emperor Heraclius, in a disputation held before him in Armenia in 622, had spoken of "one operation" in Christ, and had later asked Cyrus, Bishop of Lazoe in Phasis, whether this was correct.² Cyrus replied that he

¹ Mansi, xi. 529.
² A few words will explain the theological question. Monothelitism bears the same relation to Monophysitism that the Spanish Adoptionism of the next century bears to Nestorianism. Those who embraced it held firmly the doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon that our Lord's two natures, divine and human, are united in Him without confusion, so that His humanity remains perfect and complete, just as the Adoptionists held
OF POPE HONORIUS

did not know, and referred the question to Sergius, Patriarch of Constantinople. Sergius was in favour of the expression, firmly the doctrine of the Council of Ephesus that the two natures belong to one divine Person. But the Adoptionists did not see that adoption is not of a nature but of a Person, and therefore they wrongly taught that our Lord in His human nature might be called the adopted Son of God. And, conversely, the Monothelites could not see that activity and will belong to the nature and not to the Person, so that they held Christ to have but one motive power—

_ĩsppysia_, energy, activity, operation—and one will, whereas in truth there must be a perfect operation and will of each nature. As in the Trinity of three Persons in one Nature there is one operation, _ad extra_, and one will, so in the two natures of the one Person of Christ there are two operations and two wills—the divine will common to the Son with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and a human will, without which the human nature taken by the Son of God would be incomplete.

The danger and the attractiveness of this wrong argumentation lay in the fact that it went half way to meet the Monophysites. These heretics called the orthodox Nestorians, and declared that they divided Christ in two. The unity of will and operation was placed before the Monophysites as a proof that those who accepted the Council of Chalcedon safeguarded the oneness of the Person of Christ. The expression "one operation" was indeed a surrender of the perfect distinction of the natures, and therefore was not far off from the more moderate Monophysites, who professed simply to follow the doctrine taught by St. Cyril against the Nestorians.
and sent him a letter said to have been addressed by the Patriarch Mennas, his predecessor, to Pope Vigilius, in which "one operation" was mentioned. Sergius declared that he intended no absolute decision on the matter. Cyrus, however, was satisfied. About 630 he became Patriarch of Alexandria, one of the strongholds of the Monophysites. These were very much divided among themselves, and Cyrus induced one considerable section of them to be reconciled with the Catholic Church by a sort of compromise, which was nicknamed "the watery union." The doctrine agreed upon was summed up in nine propositions, which profess to render the teaching of Chalcedon, but express themselves in Monophysite phraseology, borrowed indeed from St. Cyril, but meant in a wrong sense by the heretics. The seventh of these propositions anathematizes all who do not confess that the same one Christ works both the divine and human works by "one theandric operation." This expresses the main thesis of Monothelitism.

Nothing could be more pleasing to the Emperor and Sergius than such a union, and the latter wrote a joyful letter of congratulation to Cyrus. But the Palestinian monk, Sophronius, was in Alexandria
at the time, and he disapproved of the teaching of "one operation" as contrary to the Chalcedonian doctrine. His reputation for sanctity was great, and Cyrus proposed that he should lay his objections before Sergius. Sophronius accordingly proceeded to Constantinople, and so far persuaded Sergius that he withdrew the "one operation" for the sake of peace, and Sophronius promised to say no more. It is evident that Sergius now distrusted this formula, but could not formally withdraw it without imperilling the union of the Alexandrian heretics.

In this dilemma he took the obvious course of laying the whole matter before the Pope.

§ 3. The Letter of Honorius.

His famous letter to Honorius ¹ begins by saying that he would desire, were it possible, to bring all his actions day by day to the Pope's cognizance and receive his advice. He relates the circumstances, how very hard it seemed to destroy the recent joyful union effected by Cyrus, with all its promises of peace, "of those who once would not hear the name of the divine Leo and the Council of Chalcedon, but who now proclaim them in a loud voice

¹ Mansi, xi. 529.
in the holy mysteries." Sophronius, he says, was not able to quote explicit testi-
monies of the ancients for two operations; but it seemed that the term "one opera-
tion" was novel, and he, Sergius, had there-
fore written to Cyrus to permit neither one nor two operations to be spoken of, when once the union of the Monophysites with the Church had been effected. Sophronius had agreed to this. At the end of the letter Sergius quotes the celebrated words of Pope Leo, *Agit enim utraque forma cum alterius communione*, which obviously imply two operations; and he seems to have been orthodox enough in meaning, though his expressions are incorrect. He has started from the Chalcedonian doctrine, but has made a sorry conclusion. He does not openly support one will, which he only mentions in connection with the supposititious letter of Mennas to Pope Vigilius, but he thinks "two operations" to be a misleading expression. He con-
cludes:

"We have thought it fitting and also necessary to give an account to your Brotherhood and concordant Blessedness, by the copies which we are sending, of what we have partially related above; and we beg your Holiness to read the whole, and, following its meaning with your God-
pleasing and full charity, if there be anything wanting in what has been said, to fill this up with the charity which God has given you; and with your holy syllables and with your desirable assistance, to signify your opinion on the matter."

The letter of Honorius, in reply, praises Sergius for his circumspection in disapproving the new expression, "one operation." So far so good. But he goes on to admit one will, because our Lord took to Himself a human nature free from the curse of original sin. The reason given implies that our Lord has a human will, only not also a corrupt lower human will. This is in answer to Sergius, who had argued that if two operations were admitted there would follow two contrary wills. The Pope declares that to teach one operation will seem Eutychian, while to teach two will seem Nestorian. Both expressions are consequently to be avoided.

1 Hefele says (p. 27, note): "One can see he was a Monothelite, and wanted to mislead the Pope." I think it clear, on the contrary, that he was puzzled by an involved problem, and wished to get the Pope's help. He seems to have done his best to think and act rightly, but he was no more exempt from error than were a Cyprian or an Aquinas.

2 Mansi, xi. 537.
Honorius is thus logically and theologically as much astray as Sergius, though both are orthodox in intention. It would no doubt be uncharitable to regard either the Pope or the Patriarch as a "private heretic."

Unfortunately these letters were afterwards treated as if they were definitions of faith. As definitions they are obviously and beyond doubt heretical, for in a definition it is the words that matter.

It is, of course, absurd to regard the letter of Honorius as a definition ex cathedra, as was done by Hefele, Pennacchi and others. It was natural to exaggerate at the time of the Vatican Council, but today the decree is better understood. If the letter of Honorius to Sergius is to be ex cathedra, a fortiori all papal encyclicals addressed to the whole Church at the present day must be ex cathedra, quod est absurdum.¹

¹ The Vatican decision explains ex cathedra to mean: Cum [Papa] omnium Christianorum pastoris et doctoris munere fungens, pro suprema sua Apostolica auctoritate doctrinam de fide vel moribus ab universa ecclesia tenendum definit. In this case not even the first condition is certainly fulfilled, for Honorius addressed Sergius alone, and it is by no means evident that he intended his letter to be published as a decree. Further, he does not appeal, as Popes habitually appealed on solemn occasions, to his apostolic authority, to the promise to Peter,
The decision of Honorius was nothing more and also nothing less than an approval given to the disciplinary arrangement suggested by Sergius. Both believed that "one will" had been said, and said in an orthodox sense, by the orthodox Mennas, unrebuked by Pope Vigilius, and neither was aware that "two operations" and "two wills" could be shown to have been consecrated by the usage of the Fathers. Sergius was at least doubtful, and set the matter before the Pope. Honorius had a higher responsibility; he decided in haste to agree with the conduct of Sergius, and he decided wrongly. The result of his letter was the so-called heresy of Monothelitism, which up to this point can scarcely be said to have as yet existed, except as an opinion under discussion.


At the time when these two letters were written, St. Sophronius had already been promoted to the patriarchal Chair of Jerusalem, and on the occasion of his enthronization had published the defence of to the tradition of his Church. Lastly, he neither defines nor condemns, utters no anathema or warning, but merely approves a policy of silence.
two operations and two wills which Sergius had demanded from him, but which the latter had not yet received when he wrote to the Pope. It is a long document, afterwards read and approved by the sixth Council, and it has the remarkable merit of being the first complete exposition of the orthodox doctrine of the two wills and natures. It was sent to all the patriarchs, and Sophronius declares that he is ready to receive corrections. For our present purpose his reference to St. Leo as speaking with Peter's voice is of interest.

After detailing his assent to the five General Councils, he adds that he accepts the divine writings of Cyril and the letters of Eastern prelates which were received by Cyril.

"And also equally with these holy writings of the all-wise Cyril I receive as holy and honoured together with them, and as propagating the same orthodoxy, the God-given and inspired letter of the great and illustrious and saintly Leo, the light of the Roman Church, or rather of the Church beneath the sun, which he, moved clearly by the Holy Ghost, wrote against the wicked Eutyches and the hateful and perverse Nestorius to the praiseworthy Bishop of the royal city,

Mansi, xi. 461-509.
OF POPE HONORIUS 19

Flavian, which I denominate and define to be the pillar of orthodoxy (following the holy Fathers, who rightly called it thus) as teaching us all orthodoxy and destroying all heresy and driving it away from the God-protected halls of our holy Catholic Church. And together with these inspired syllables and characters, I accept all his letters and teachings as proceeding from the mouth of Peter the Coryphaeus, and I kiss them and salute them and embrace them with all my soul. Receiving these, as I have said, the five holy and divine assemblies of the blessed Fathers and all the writings of Cyril the all-wise, and especially those against the madness of Nestorius and the letters of the Oriental Bishops, written to the same most divine Cyril, and by him acknowledged to be orthodox, and whatever Leo, the most holy pastor of the most holy Church of the Romans, has written, and especially what he composed against the Eutychian and Nestorian abomination, I recognize the latter as definitions of Peter and the former as those of Mark, and besides all the heaven-taught teachings of all the chosen mystagogues of our Catholic Church,” &c.

If St. Sophronius extends the idea of Peter speaking by Leo to St. Cyril, so
that he embraces the words of that doctor as the words of St. Mark, this does not detract from the importance of his testimony as an Eastern Bishop that the words of a Pope are to him as the words of a greater than Mark—of the Coryphaeus of the apostles.

The Saint lived only until 638. Before his death a memorable scene occurred which has been vividly described for us by the other actor in it, Stephen, Bishop of Dora in Palestine, within the Saint's patriarchate. He speaks as follows in a document which he presented in person to Pope St. Martin at the Lateran Council of 649. He is speaking of the troubles brought upon the patriarchate of Sophronius by Monothelitism.

"And for this cause, sometimes we asked for water to our head and to our eyes a fountain of tears, sometimes the wings of a dove, according to holy David, that we might fly away and announce these things to the Chair which rules and presides over all, I mean to yours, the head and highest, for the healing of the whole wound. For this it has been accustomed to do from of old and from the beginning with power by its canonical or apostolical authority, because the truly

\[\text{Mansi, x. 893.}\]
OF POPE HONORIUS

great Peter, head of the apostles, was clearly thought worthy not only to be entrusted with the keys of heaven, alone apart from the rest, to open it worthily to believers, or to close it justly to those who disbelieve the Gospel of grace, but because he was also first commissioned to feed the sheep of the whole Catholic Church; for 'Peter,' said He, 'lovest thou Me? Feed My sheep'; and again, because he had in a manner peculiar and special, a faith in the Lord stronger than all and unchangeable, to be converted and to confirm his fellows and spiritual brethren when tossed about, as having been adorned by God Himself, incarnate for us, with power and sacerdotal authority.'

Nothing could be more confident than this beautiful exposition of the writer's faith in the promises of Christ to Peter. It is noticeable that all the three principal Petrine texts are quoted, showing that then as now they were recognized as the loci classici upon the point. And Stephen goes on to assert that this was the faith of St. Sophronius himself, as, indeed, was indicated by the words of that saint.

"And Sophronius of blessed memory, who was Patriarch of the holy city of
Christ our God, and under whom I was
Bishop, conferring not with flesh and
blood, but caring only for the things of
Christ with respect to your Holiness,
hastened to send my nothingness without
delay about this matter alone to this
Apostolic and great See.”

Sophronius had nobly resisted the
heretics while he lived, but only suc-
cceeded in raising against himself a storm
of detraction. But for all this he was
confident as a lion:

“Being full of divine zeal and courage,
he took me unworthy, and set me on holy
Calvary, where for our sakes He who by
nature is God above us, the Lord Jesus
Christ, voluntarily deigned to be crucified
in the flesh, and he bound me with bonds
not to be undone, saying: ‘Thou shalt
give an account to the God who was
 crucified for us in this holy place, in His
glorious and awful advent, when He shall
come to judge the living and the dead, if
thou delay and allow His faith to be en-
dangered, since, as thou knowest, I am
myself let, on account of the invasion of
the Saracens which has come upon us for
our sins. Swiftly pass, therefore, from
one end of the world to the other, until
thou come to the Apostolic See, where are
the foundations of the holy doctrines. Not
OF POPE HONORIUS

once, not twice, but many times, make clearly known to all those holy men there all that here has been done; and tire not instantly urging and beseeching, until out of their apostolic wisdom they bring forth judgement unto victory...

"I, therefore, trembling and confounded at the tremendous adjuration laid on me in that venerable and awful spot, and considering the episcopal dignity which by God's permission was mine, and because I was urged by the requests of almost all the pious Bishops of the East, in agreement with the departed Sophronius (I being the first in the jurisdiction of Jerusalem), I gave not, to speak graphically, sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids, nor rest to my temples, for the sake of the fulfilment of this beloved command. Without delay I made this journey for this purpose alone; and since then thrice have I run to your apostolic feet, urging and beseeching the prayer of Sophronius and of all, that is, that you will assist the imperilled faith of Christians..."

Such is the witness of Stephen to the belief of the patriarchate of Jerusalem. We shall hear more of him presently.

The synodal letter of Sophronius does not appear to have had any effect upon
Sergius, but we have no further knowledge of his conduct. Of Honorius we have two fragments of a letter which were produced and read at the sixth Council. He writes to Sergius telling him that he has informed Cyrus of Alexandria that the new expressions "one or two operations" are to be dropped, the use of such expressions being most silly, πάντα πάντα. This was naturally condemned as heresy by the Council. But in this second fragment, Honorius implicitly teaches two operations, for he says rightly that the two natures work each what is proper to it, thus stultifying his own decision. The fragments read as if, after seeing the arguments of Sophronius, the Pope was trying to bolster up his wrong decision with orthodox arguments.

§ 5. The "Ecthesis" of Heraclius.

In one of the last four months of 638, the Emperor Heraclius issued the famous "Ecthesis," composed for him by Sergius. It enforces the decision of Honorius. All the Emperor's subjects are to confess one will of our Lord, but to avoid the expressions "one or two operations." We have seen that Sergius was in doubt when

1 Mansi, x. 991.
he wrote to the Pope. Now, having received the reply, he causes the teaching of the See of Rome to be proclaimed by the Emperor. Before his death, in December of the same year, he further held a great Synod at Constantinople. Its decision has been preserved, in which the ecthesis is acclaimed as "truly agreeing with the apostolic preaching." This is apparently a reference to its being based upon the letter of Honorius. "These are the doctrines of the Fathers, these are the supports of the Church," &c. The decisions were sent to absent Bishops, and Cyrus received them with great rejoicings. The See of Antioch was occupied by a Patriarch who had been uncanonically appointed by Sergius himself. St. Sophronius was dead, and his Chair was usurped by a supporter of the ecthesis.

1 Hefele says, "The agreement of the ecthesis with the two letters of Honorius is only apparent" (v. 64). It may, indeed, be said that the reasons given in the ecthesis are less clearly orthodox, but at least it was simply modelled on the first letter of Honorius. Catholic writers have not been willing to see this, for the sake of the Pope's honour, while Gallicans and Protestants have been equally blind, because they did not choose to admit that Sergius and the Emperor were in intention only giving effect to the Pope's decision and would never have thought of publishing such a proclamation without his authority.
Pope Honorius had also died before its publication. The new Pope, Severinus, who only reigned two months, is said to have had time to reject it.

On the arrival of the envoys from Rome to ask for the Emperor's confirmation of Severinus's election according to custom, the clergy of Constantinople (there was as yet no new Patriarch) presented them with the ecdesis, declaring that they would give them no assistance in the matter for which they had made so long a voyage, unless the envoys would promise to persuade the new Pope to subscribe the document without delay. St. Maximus tells us that he was informed of the event by his friends at Constantinople. He writes:

"Having discovered the tenor of the document, since by refusing they would have caused the first and mother of Churches and the City [ecclesiarum principem et matrem et urbei] to remain so long a time in widowhood, they replied quietly: 'We cannot act with authority in this matter, for we have received a commission to execute, not an order to make a profession of faith. But we assure you that we will relate all that you have put forward, and we will show the document itself to him who is to be consecrated,
and if he should judge it to be correct, we will ask him to append his signature to it. But do not therefore place any obstacle in our way now and do violence to us by delaying us and keeping us here. For none has a right to use violence, especially when faith is in question. For herein even the weakest waxes mighty, and the meek becomes a warrior, and by comfort- ing his soul with the divine word, is hardened against the greatest attacks. How much more in the case of the clergy and Church of the Romans, which from of old until now, as the elder of all the Churches which are under the sun, presides over all? Having surely received this canonically, as well from councils and the apostles, as from the princes of the latter, and being numbered in their company, she is subject to no writings or issues of synodical documents, on account of the eminence of her pontificate, even as in all these things all are equally subject to her according to sacerdotal law.

"And so when, without fear but with all holy and becoming confidence, those ministers of the truly firm and immovable rock, that is of the most great and Apostolic Church at Rome, had so applied to the clergy of the royal city [Constantinople] it was seen that they had conciliated them and had acted prudently, that the others
might be humble and modest, while they themselves made known the orthodoxy and purity of their own faith from the beginning. But those of Constantinople, admiring their piety, thought that such a deed ought rightly to be recompensed; and ceasing from offering them the document, they promised to procure by their own care the issue of the Emperor's order with regard to the episcopal election. When this was accomplished, the apo-
crisarit dear to God thankfully returned home.

“Of this document, divinely honoured Father, a copy has been sent to me also. They have explained in it the cause for being silent about the natural operations in Christ our God, that is in His natures, of which and in which He is believed to be; and how in future neither one nor two are to be mentioned. It is only to be allowed to confess that the divine and human [works] proceeded from the same word of God incarnate and are to be attributed to one and the same” (Mansi, x. 677–8).

This evidence with regard to the papacy is very remarkable as proceeding from the Saint's orthodox friends at Constantinople. The Roman envoys claim absolute immunity from all synodal decisions, and
OF POPE HONORIUS

declare that their Church is above all others, propter pontificatum praelectionem. These rights are from Councils, from apostles, and from the princes of the apostles. Such claims we expect from Rome. But the clergy of Constantinople so amply admit them that they are even touched by the boldness of the envoys. St. Maximus and his friends are exultant; the Church of Rome is truly the immovable rock. We see then that it is a doctrine of Constantinople, as well as of Jerusalem, that "in Rome are the foundations of the holy doctrines."

§ 6. The Apology of John IV.

Severinus was not able to be consecrated until May, 640. He was succeeded in December by John IV. The new Pope, before the death of Heraclius (February, 641), held a Synod against Monothelitism. He informed the new Patriarch of Constantinople, Pyrrhus, of his condemnation of the eterthesis, and the Emperor before his death excused himself, laying the blame on Sergius, and wrote to John IV a letter, in which he disowned his own eterthesis.¹ The Pope sent an epistle to the elder son of Heraclius, declaring that he was sure

¹ Mansi, x. 9, in Acts of Maximus.
THE CONDEMNATION

the *echesis* would now be withdrawn, and that the whole West rejected the new heresy. This document has become well known as the *Apology for Honorius.*

The Pope says that he hears the new patriarch Pyrrhus has been confusing men's minds with his novel teachings, and supporting them by the name of Honorius. The defence which follows is a very lame one. It points out quite truly that both Sèrgius "of reverend memory" and Honorius only used the expression "one will" because they would not admit contrary wills. But the whole argument of the letter of John IV shows that his predecessor was wrong in admitting the expression. What is most remarkable is that not a word is said about the pro-

1 Mansi, x. 682.

2 St. Maximus uses the same arguments in his letter to Marinus, and he tells us that he had heard from the holy Roman abbot, Anastasius, that he had heard the Abbot John Symponus, the writer of Honorius' letter, affirm that he never made any mention in it of the abolition of the natural human will in our Lord, but only of the lower will of the flesh, adding that the letter had been corrupted by the Greek translators. This seems to be untrue of the version read at the sixth Council, as it was examined and approved by the papal representatives. St. Maximus has perhaps slightly exaggerated the testimony of Abbot John in repeating it (Mansi, x. 695).
hibition by Honorius of both one and two operations, the very point for which St. Maximus and Pope St. Martin were to lay down their lives.

It is clear that Pyrrhus taught one will in the heretical sense. But, after the death of Constantine and the exile of his younger brother, Heracleonas, Pyrrhus was himself exiled to Africa, and a successor, Paul, was set up uncanonically in his stead.

John IV died on October 11, 642. Theodore I, his successor, wrote to Paul refusing to confirm his election as he had requested, until Pyrrhus had been properly deposed by a Synod to be held in presence of two papal representatives. "Why has he allowed the echthesis to remain on the wall, though it had been disowned by the late Emperor and condemned by the late Pope?" The heresy of Pyrrhus is made manifest by his praise of Heraclius, and by his signing, and causing others to sign, the echthesis.¹

¹ Mansi, x. 702.

We possess an interesting letter to this Pope from a Synod held in Cyprus, May 29, 643, in which the Bishops say (Mansi, x. 914):

"To the most holy and God-confirmed Father of Fathers, Archbishop and oecumenical Patriarch, Lord Theodore, Sergius, least of Bishops, greeting in the Lord:

"Christ, our God, has instituted your apostolic
§ 7. The Recantation of Pyrrhus.

Pyrrhus was now in Africa, and being no longer at court, had no temptation to remain in heresy, for the Africans were orthodox. In July, 645, probably at Carthage, a great disputation took place in presence of Gregory, the governor, and of many Bishops, between Pyrrhus and St. Maximus Confessor, who had become, since the death of St. Sophronius, the protagonist of orthodoxy in the East. This illustrious saint, born at Constantinople, had been the first secretary of Heraclius, but, leaving the world, had betaken himself to a monastery at Scutari,

chair, O holy head, as a God-fixed and immovable foundation. For thou, as truly spake the divine Word, art Peter, and upon thy foundation the pillars of the Church have been fixed, and to thee He committed the keys of the heavens, He ordered thee to bind and to loose with authority on earth and in heaven. Thou art set as the destroyer of profane heresies, as Coryphaeus and leader of the orthodox and unsullied faith. Despise not then, Father, the faith of our Fathers, tossed by waves and imperilled; disperse the rule of the foolish with the light of thy divine knowledge, O most holy. Destroy the blasphemies and insolence of the new heretics with their novel expressions. For nothing is wanting to your orthodox and apostolic definition and tradition for the augmentation of the faith amongst us. For we (O inspired one, you who hold converse with the holy
where he became abbot. The minutes of the disputation are interesting. Pyrrhus was eventually convinced, his quotations from the Fathers being refuted by Maximus, who declared further that the letter of Mennas to Vigilius was a forgery.

Pyrrhus gives up Vigilius. But what of Honorius, who plainly taught one will? (p. 740). Maximus replies that his letter must be interpreted by the writer of it, who was the same as the writer of the apology of John IV, viz., John Symponus. Pyrrhus can only reply: "My predecessor accepted it too simply, considering the Apostles and sit with them) believe and confess from of old since our very swaddling clothes, teaching according to the holy and God-fearing Pope Leo, and declaring that "each nature works with the communion of the other," &c.

They are ready to be martyred rather than forsake the doctrine of St. Leo.

"May God, the Creator of all, preserve for many years our all holy Lord for the stability of His holy Churches and the orthodox faith, the good Shepherd, who lay down your own life for your spiritual sheep, and who chase away the ravages of the wolf with your pastoral staff."

At this time Cyprus was a province ecclesiastically independent of the Patriarch of Antioch. The recognition of the Pope's primacy could hardly be stronger. But, when persecution arose, Sergius was on the side of the heretics, not of the martyrs.

1 Mansi, x. 709.
wording alone." Maximus answers that what he dislikes about Sergius is his changeableness: "You never know where to have him." Pyrrhus then renounces the "one operation," and asks pardon for himself and his predecessors, as having failed by ignorance. "Is there no way of saving their memory while rejecting their doctrine?" "There is no other way," Maximus answers, "but to keep silence as to their persons, yet to anathematize the heresy." Pyrrhus laments that so the great Synod he had held will be condemned. Maximus replies that it was no Synod.  

"Pyrrhus: If there is no other way than this, I am ready to place my own salvation before everything else; and to do 

1 "I marvel that you call that a Synod which was not held according to synodical laws and canons and ecclesiastical sanctions. For the encyclical epistle did not receive the consent of the Patriarchs, nor were the place and day of meeting fixed, and there was neither introducer nor accuser; those who assembled had no letters of commendation, neither the Bishops from their Metropolitans, nor the Metropolitans from their Patriarchs, nor were there letters or representatives sent by the other Patriarchs." The Synod was thus clearly intended as a kind of General Council of the East, no doubt at the Emperor's wish, and Bishops not subject to Constantinople were present. Hefele (p. 86) should not have called it Pyrrhus's own "Patriarchal Synod."
this with completeness, I only beg that I may in consequence be deemed worthy of [approaching] the apostolic seats, or rather the princes of the apostles themselves, and of seeing the face of the most holy Pope, and of presenting him with a libellus with respect to the absurdities which have been committed.

"Maximus and Gregory the Patrician said: Since your proposal is good and useful to the Church, so be it."

Thus end the Acts. A contemporary has added the note:

"Therefore, when he was with us in this famous city of Rome, he fulfilled his promise, and condemned the dogmas of the impious eterthesis, and joined himself to the Catholic Church by a right profession, by the grace and co-operation of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

In the following year the Bishops of Africa and the adjoining islands held Synods against the Monotheletites by the counsel of St. Maximus. According to rule they sent their decisions to Rome, and four of their letters are still extant in the Acts of the Lateran Council, at which they were read. The first of these is a joint letter from the Primates of
Numidia, Byzacene, and Mauritania, in the name of three provincial Councils which they had respectively held.¹

They have heard that the heresy is

¹ Their introduction is modelled on the well-known letters of Popes Innocent and Zosimus to the African Councils of 417-18. "No one can doubt that there is in the Apostolic See a great and unfailing fountain pouring forth waters for all Christians, whence streams do richly proceed, bountifully irrigating the whole Christian world; to which See also, in honour of B. Peter, the rules of the Fathers have decreed all special reverence in searching out the things of God which ought by all means to be carefully examined, and above all and justly by the Apostolic Head of Bishops, whose care it is of old as well to condemn what is evil as to approve what is laudable. For it is sanctioned by the ancient rules that whatsoever is done, even in remote and distant provinces, shall neither be discussed nor accepted, unless it be first brought to the knowledge of your good See, so that a just sentence may be confirmed by its authority, and that the other Churches may thence receive the original preaching as from its native source, and that the mysteries of the faith of salvation may remain in incorrupt purity throughout the various regions of the world. Wherefore most humbly doing obeisance to your Apostolic Headship, with tears we inform you of that concerning which we cannot be silent without groaning of heart—that some time ago a hateful invention at Constantinople was brought to our notice. If we have been silent until now, it is because we believed that it had been destroyed by the most serene examination of the Apostolic See."
spreading, and have read the *libellus* which Pyrrhus had presented to the Pope; and in consequence they have decided to send a remonstrance to Paul, the Bishop of Constantinople, beseeching him with tears to remove from his Church and himself the new heresy which Pyrrhus had already rejected, and to have the *echesis* taken down from the doors of the churches, where it scandalized the orthodox people of his city. Since the conference of Maximus with Pyrrhus, the patrician Gregory had revolted and made himself Emperor of Africa. In the next year he was vanquished by the Saracens, and for this reason the Africans were afraid to write directly to Constantinople. They therefore enclose their letters to the Pope.¹


In accordance with the desire of these Councils Pope Theodore addressed a

¹ The enclosures are a letter to the Emperor Constantine and one to the Patriarch Paul. In the latter are many quotations from Ambrose and Augustine. A fourth letter is from Victor of Carthage, who had become Bishop after the other letters were written. He therefore adds in his own name this letter, replete with rather fulsome compliments to Pope Theodore.
letter to Paul of Constantinople, which has not been preserved. The reply of Paul\(^1\) commences with professions of the love of union, of charity, of humility, of silence. He relates that the Papal envoys, after much discussion, at last begged him to write his explanation of the will of Christ, and to send it to the Pope. He therefore exposes his views, which are those of the ephesis. He quotes in his own favour Gregory Nazianzen, Athanasius and Cyril, "with which testimonies Sergius and Honorius of pious memory are in agreement and accord, who adorned respectively the Sees of new and elder Rome." Paul seems to be more settled in his heresy than were Sergius and Pyrrhus. Upon receipt of this letter Pope Theodore pronounced a sentence of deposition against him.

Meanwhile Pyrrhus had returned, as St. Martin says, like a dog to his vomit. It may have been in this year, 648,\(^2\) that

\(^1\) Mansi, x. 1020.

\(^2\) We learn from the report handed in to St. Martin at the Lateran Council by Bishop Stephen of Dora, that about this time he was appointed by Pope Theodore to be Vicar Apostolic of Palestine, in the absence of an orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem. Sergius, Bishop of Joppa, had usurped that dignity, after the retirement of the Persians, who had invaded the country; and he had pro-
St. Maximus wrote a letter to a high official in the East, called Peter, of which parts have been preserved. In it he denounces the *ecthesis* as worse than the old Monophysite doctrine. Yet he defends Honorius once more:

"In this regard the wretches have not conformed to the sense of the Apostolic See, and, what is laughable, or rather lamentable, as proving their ignorance, they have not hesitated to lie against the Apostolic See itself; but as though they were in its counsel, and as if they had received a decree from it, in the acts they have composed in defence of the impious *ecthesis*, they have claimed the great Honorius on their side."

He appeals to Sophronius, to Arcadius (the late Metropolitan of Cyprus and predecessor of Sergius, whose letter had been cited in a note), and to the Popes:

"What did the divine Honorius do, and
after him the aged Severinus, and John who followed him? Yet further, what supplication has the blessed Pope, who now sits, not made? Have not the whole East and West brought their tears, laments, obsecrations, deprecations, both before God in prayer and before men in their letters? *If the Roman See recognizes Pyrrhus to be not only a reprobate but a heretic, it is certainly plain that every one who anathematizes those who have rejected Pyrrhus, anathematizes the See of Rome, that is, he anathematizes the Catholic Church.* I need hardly add that he excommunicates himself also, if indeed he is in communion with the Roman See and the Catholic Church of God. I beseech you, therefore, blessed Lord, to order that no one should speak of Pyrrhus as *sanctissimus* or *almificus*, for the holy canon does not allow him to be so styled. For he who has wilfully separated from the Catholic Church has fallen from all holiness. For it is not right that one who has already been condemned and cast out by the Apostolic See of the city of Rome for his wrong opinions should be named with any kind of honour, until he be received by her, having returned to her, nay, to our Lord, by a pious confession and orthodox faith, by which
he can receive holiness and the name of holy. Therefore, if he wishes neither to be a heretic nor to be accounted one, let him not make satisfaction to this or that person, for this is superfluous and unreasonable. For just as all are scandalized at him when one is scandalized, so also, when satisfaction has been made to one, all without doubt are satisfied. Let him hasten before all things to satisfy the Roman See, for if it is satisfied, all will agree in calling him pious and orthodox. For he only speaks in vain who thinks he ought to persuade or entrap persons like myself, and does not satisfy and implore the blessed Pope of the most holy Church of the Romans, that is, the Apostolic See, which from the incarnate Son of God Himself, and also by all holy synods, according to the holy canons and definitions, has received universal and supreme dominion, authority, and power of binding and loosing over all the holy Churches of God which are in the whole world. For with it the Word who is above the celestial powers binds and looses in heaven also. For if he thinks he must satisfy others, and fails to implore the most blessed Roman Pope, he is acting like a man who, when accused of murder or some other crime, does not
hasten to prove his innocence to the judge appointed by law, but only uselessly and without profit does his best to demonstrate his innocence to private individuals, who have no power to acquit him from the accusation. Wherefore, my blessed Lord, extend yet further the precept which it is known that you have made well and according to God’s will, by which Pyrrhus is not allowed to speak or mis-speak with regard to dogma. But discover clearly his intention by further inquiry, whether he will altogether agree to the truth. And if he is careful to do this, exhort him to make a becoming statement to the Roman Pope, so that by his command the matter concerning Pyrrhus may be canonically and suitably ordered for the glory of God and the praise of your sublimity.\footnote{Mansi, x. 692.}

The doctrine of this passage is explicit enough. We have already seen that Maximus was not the only Constantinopolitan who held it. Indeed, he clearly assumes it to be well known and admitted by all.

Consequently we can understand that the rejection by the Pope of Paul’s confession of faith was felt by him as a serious blow. At first, indeed, the sup-
planter of Pyrrhus showed nothing but anger, and wreaked his wrath on the Roman apocrisiarii who had brought the papal sentence of deposition to the East. He revenged himself by destroying the altar in the chapel which belonged to the Holy See in the palace of Placidia at Constantinople, "in order that the envoys should be unable to offer the immaculate, adorable, and spiritual sacrifice, and be partakers of the divine and life-giving sacraments." In reply to their admonition to him to renounce his heresy, "he persecuted them together with other orthodox men and venerable priests, casting some of them into prison, sending others into exile, and subjecting others to stripes." This information we have from the speech of St. Martin at the Lateran Council a few months later.¹

§ 9. The "Typus" of Constans and Paul.

But Paul did not intend to break with the Holy See and with Catholicity altogether, as we learn from his next move, which was nothing less than the final withdrawal of the ecthesis, which his appeal to the name of Pope Honorius

¹ Mansi, x, 879,
had not availed to defend. Up to this time the great objection to the *ecthesis* on the part of the orthodox—of St. Sophronius, of St. Maximus, and especially of successive Popes—had been its assertion of the one will. It had been confidently asserted that the meaning of Honorius in acknowledging one will had been misunderstood and that his secretary was alive to establish his real intention. This point therefore Paul simply withdrew. But the main idea of the *ecthesis* was not so much its half-hearted defence of one will as its prohibition of both the expressions "one operation" and "two operations," and here at least it could not possibly be said to misrepresent the teaching of Honorius. It was indeed logically necessary to apply the same prohibition to "one will" and "two wills," for it was inconsistent to permit "one will" but to forbid "one operation."

Paul therefore persuaded the Emperor Constans to substitute for the *ecthesis* or exposition of faith an imperial decree, approving neither doctrine, but forbidding the naming of one or two wills equally with one or two operations.

"We declare [says the Emperor] to our orthodox subjects that from the present moment they no longer have..."