

UNDER POPE HONORIUS.

By the Very Rev. Eneas McDonell Dawson, V.G., LL.D., etc



DIVINE of the Oxford School, misled by erroneous traditions, gave out for the information of the British public, that the distinguished Pope Honorius in the seventh century, was condemned as a heretic by the sentence of an Œcumenical Council. The assertion of the learned divine is opposed by such an array of learning, acute criticism, historical investigation, the testimony of witnesses contemporary with the accused Pope, that Pope's own letters which, it is alleged, contain the supposed heresy, the judgment of eminent theologians and even Papal authority, that it would have well become even an Oxford scholar to hesitate and investigate before giving utterance to so serious an accusation. What was really the case? When there was question in the Eastern Church of an opinion with regard to the person of Christ, which, when fully developed and understood, proved to be heretical, and was condemned as such, Sergius, Patriarch of Constantinople, consulted Pope Honorius concerning this opinion. The excellent Pope replied in two letters which have come down to our time, and, fortunately, for they enable us to use our judgment as to what they express, and exempt us from the perplexing task of examining the whole criticisms and other writings of by-gone times. Having read these letters attentively, and they are the only documents on which the charge of heresy pretends to be founded, we cannot concur in the view expressed by the Oxford divine, that in them Pope Honorius declared his entire concurrence with Sergius' opinion. 'The simple question is,' adds the learned Doctor, "whether the heretical documents proceeded from him as an infallible authority, or as a private Bishop." We do not think that any such question ought

to be asked; but we do think that our author ought, before denouncing the documents in question as heretical, to have asked himself the question whether they express any heresy. Let anyone read the letters, and it will be seen that they are written with much pains and great anxiety. They find fault, it is true, with the term *operationes* as applied to Christ, a term which was at the time new, and which, even at the present day, sounds somewhat barbarous. The Pope advised that this term should not be used as it was interpreted, or rather misinterpreted, to express two contrary volitions in the mind of Christ, causing constant warfare, as in each man the will impelled by concupiscence, wars against the will which aspires to virtue. Thus in man, fallen from primeval innocence, there are not two wills, but the same will at variance with itself having two contrary *operations*, the one towards good, the other towards evil. There could be no such operations in our Blessed Lord, who, Pope Honorius distinctly says, is perfect God and perfect man, having all the attributes of the Divine nature and all the faculties of the human, but in no degree subject to corruption or concupiscence, the fruit of original sin, the stain of which he had not, could not have contracted. It would scarcely be possible to affirm more plainly the sound doctrine concerning the person of our Lord, to which the Monothelite heresy, afterwards condemned, was opposed. Holding such sound doctrine, the Pope could well afford to discourage the use of terms which were apt to be abused and which were abused. More than this, he dreaded and had reason to dread that if discussions were continued at the time, there would ensue a separation of the Eastern from the Western Church. In the latter prevailed orthodox doctrines in regard to the matter so violently agitated in the East. Was it wonderful then, that Pope Honorius judged the time inopportune for further discussions, the assembling of