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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, SEPT. 20, 1850.

POPE HONORIUS AND THE SIXTH
GENERAL COUNCIL.

In the whole range of Ecclesiastical History there is not, we believe, a single point which has given rise to so much discussion as this one of the condemnation of Pope Honorius. It has been examined and re-examined, and sifted with all possible diligence and perseverance by many distinguished writers both within and without the Church. Still the matter rests in the shadow of doubt, and in all probability it will remain so till the end of all things. It would be idle to suppose then that either Britannicus or we could throw any new light on a subject over which the darkness of many ages has already gathered, and we will, therefore, take this opportunity of saying our last word on the question, and then let it rest. We seek not to deny that Honorius *was* condemned by the sixth general council, but we do assert and maintain that his error was purely one of discipline, in that he was prevailed upon to be silent in his official capacity at a time when he should have spoken—in that he suffered the infant heresy to gather strength, and took no effectual means of resisting its progress. Yet even this, his *great error*, was not without a show of excuse. The Church had just begun to recover herself after her long warfare with the two great heresies, the Nestorian and the Eutychian, (to which latter the Monothelite had some affinity) and the artful patriarch Sergius succeeded but too well in convincing Honorius that to come forth openly and discuss this newly-broached question (which was, after all, an exceedingly abstruse one) would but tear open anew the wounds so lately closed, and revive the smouldering fire. Moreover, he had the ingenuity, as we see by his letters to the pope, to make it appear that the error regarded *mere words* rather than any substantial point of doctrine; and so it was that Honorius, although perfectly orthodox in his own belief, consented to let the matter rest. Another point to be considered is this, that the Bishop of Rome, in his own private capacity, is as fallible as any other mortal—it is only when speaking from the pontifical and judicial chair of Peter, and addressing the whole Church *ex cathedra*, that his decisions are, or can be, infallible.

Honorius wrote these letters privately to Sergius, as one man, one bishop to another—(albeit that the letters themselves contain not the slightest error of faith, being purely Catholic in their entire sense) he never gave any public decision on the question of the Monothelite error, and if he was condemned by the councils, it was, as we have before said, solely because by his silence he had in some sort connived with the heretic Sergius. That he never pronounced any erroneous opinion for the belief of the faithful is clearly attested by the following circumstance: St. Agatho, one of the immediate successors of Honorius, being called upon to assemble a council to pronounce on the Monothelite question, addressed two letters to the three emperors (brothers) then reigning conjointly, but chiefly to Constantius, the elder brother, who was present at the sixth general council. In the first of these letters (read aloud before the council) the holy pontiff says, after setting forth the unvarying

belief of the universal Church: "Such is the apostolic doctrine which your protector, the blessed Peter, has transmitted unto us, not that it may be kept under a bushel, but that it may be trumpeted forth over all the universe." This same Peter has received from the Saviour of all, by a triple recommendation, the charge of feeding the spiritual flock, and by the assistance of that same Peter, this Apostolic Church of his, has never departed from the way of truth into any error whatsoever. So all the Catholic Church and the general councils have ever faithfully embraced and followed in all things the authority of this Apostolic Church, as being the authority of the prince of the Apostles. We hereby send you, therefore, the rule of true faith, which, whether in prosperity or in adversity, has been preserved and courageously defended by the spiritual mother of your empire, the Apostolic Church of Christ, which, by the grace of Almighty God, shall never be convinced of having wandered from the path of apostolical tradition, nor ever given way to the novelties of heretics; but such as she has received the faith from her founders, the princes of the Apostles, such has she preserved it free from spot or stain, according to the promise made by our Saviour to the chief of His disciples: "Peter, Peter, I have prayed for thee that thy faith may not fail; when thou shalt be converted, go strengthen thy brethren." Let your majesty consider, then, that it is the Lord and Saviour, whose gift faith is, who has promised that the faith of Peter shall not fail, and who enjoins him to strengthen his brethren. "This is what all the apostolical pontiffs, my predecessors, have ever courageously done, as all the world knows." Now one would almost imagine that St. Agatho had the calumnies against Honorius in his mind while he wrote, since he twice expressly boasts that the Church of Rome—the See of Rome—had never countenanced or promulgated error, and it is evident that he himself believed Honorius innocent—if not, why say that all the Popes, his predecessors, had ever done their duty in strengthening the brethren? But the most conclusive fact of all is that the letter was received with acclamation by the council, which certainly would not falsify its own decisions by approving of this remarkable passage, if it had indeed found Honorius, or any other pope, guilty of propounding or encouraging heresy. Honorius, then, erred in a matter of discipline, that we will willingly grant, although he was "one of the infallibles." But other *infallibles* have erred in such matters long before his time. Of course Britannicus is aware that St. Peter himself erred in a matter of discipline, seeing that to conciliate the Jews, whose apostle he expressly was, he refused to eat with the Gentiles, whereupon St. Paul took upon him to rebuke him, maintaining the freedom and equality of all. Now we suppose it will not be denied that both were divinely inspired—St. Paul tells us so expressly, when he says, "For He who wrought in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, wrought in me also among the Gentiles," and yet the one found it necessary to chide the other for his dissimulation. This was precisely the case when Honorius, the successor of Peter in the pontifical chair, was censured by the council—his inferior in ecclesiastical authority—for his *dissimulation*, whereby the heresy was suffered to wax strong. Yet St. Peter's faith was in no way called in question; and that of Honorius was just as sound, even judging from his own letters.

With respect to the Maronites we have said our say, and do not propose to occupy our time cavilling over subjects which are open to all readers of Ecclesiastical history. That people is the remnant of the Syrian Church—they have preserved from the beginning until now the fundamental doctrines of the Church—they fell into the Monothelite heresy, it is true, regarding the question of *one* or *two* wills in Christ—but no sooner had they an opportunity of communicating again with the centre of Catholic Unity than they returned to the bosom of the Church, where they have ever since remained, notwithstanding all the persecution that they have endured in almost every age since then. They believe in all things as the Catholic Church does, excepting only the one point of the celibacy of the clergy, and that is scarcely an exception for the higher orders of their clergy do not marry, nor even priests after their ordination. If they have a wife before their ordination, they can keep her, but they do not afterwards contract marriage, and even in those cases where the priest has a wife, he is regarded by them as less pure, less worthy of respect than those who have none. For the other point of Transubstantiation, it is far too grave and solemn for newspaper discussion, but we cannot help thinking that Britannicus was not in a serious mood when he said it was not *invented* at the time when the Monothelite heresy was quenched.

The italics are our own. See *Nolbach's History of the Catholic Church*.

How is it possible that a doctrine of such tremendous—such vital importance—could have been invented—or have crept into the Church—without opposition—without a voice either public or private being raised against it—when even an abstruse error like that of the Monothelites called forth such a storm of opposition, and was met by the solemn protest of the assembled church? What council ever met to pronounce on the introduction of the doctrine of the Eucharist—what heretic breached it—when or where was it first spoken of?—oh shame! Britannicus—shame! We take the liberty of advising you to be more cautious in your choice of words—to let the Eucharist alone—and to leave the memory of Pope Honorius where it lies!

Three times had Balaam, the son of Beor, smitten his ass, before the much-enduring beast opened its mouth to reply. Thrice also have we endeavored to stir up that dullest of all dull creatures, the French Canadian Missionary Society—and, at last, its voice also has found an utterance, through the medium of the *Montreal Witness*. Very angry with us, is the writer. Having abandoned the charge of scoffing and profanity, he accuses us of buffoonery and falsehood. We will reply to both these charges.

If, by buffoonery, the *Montreal Witness* means, that we have laughed at those holy men, the Pedlars of the Society,—that we have scorned their pretensions, to sanctity, and held up their sleek, oily, and demure countenances, to derision, we at once plead guilty to the charge. We have used ridicule against them, rather than reason and argument, and not without good cause. Reason and argument, we look upon as pearls of great price—not rashly to be cast before the feet of swine—as good, solid, substantial food, to be reserved for the use of the children of the faith; and it is written, that "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto dogs." Such crumbs as may chance to fall from our table, the *Montreal Witness* and the F. C. M. Society are welcome to pick up, and masticate at their leisure.

So much for not employing reason and argument.

We made use of ridicule, and adopted a flippant style, because we consider such a style the only one fit to be made use of against such ridiculous antagonists,—because we consider ridicule as the most effective weapon that can be used against cant and hypocrisy. "Vermin," says Sydney Smith, "have no right to complain of the weapons used against them. If this were otherwise," the rev. gentleman continues, "we should have one set of vermin banishing small tooth-combs—another protesting against mouse-traps—a third prohibiting the finger and thumb—and a fourth exclaiming against the intolerable infamy of using soap and water. These creatures must all be caught, killed, and cracked in the manner, and by the instruments which are found most efficacious to their destruction."

So much for the charge of buffoonery. Now for the charge of falsehood.

Nothing would afford the *Montreal Witness* greater pleasure than to convict us of error in any of our assertions. He has not attempted to do so, because he well knows that every word that we have written is strictly true. However, we lay no claims to the possession of infallibility, like Antoine Moret, and we assure the editor of the *Montreal Witness* that, if he can succeed in disproving any one of our assertions—if he can show us that we have *wronged* any individual—we will most cheerfully give admission in our next number to his evidence against us; we will retract our statements, and make the *amende honorable*,—and this because it is our firm determination, to the utmost of our power, to act fairly, uprightly, and honestly to every man,—in a word, as unlike an evangelical person, or member of the F. C. M. Society, as possible.

We also have brought the charge of falsehood against the *Records* of the F. C. M. Society, but in so doing we pointed out what statements we considered to be false, and gave our reasons for so considering them.

For instance. In the *Record* for July, 1850, we especially pointed out as false, the legend of Andre Solandt, and gave it the lie.

It is very difficult to prove a negative—to disprove charges brought against individuals, designated merely by the initial letters of their place of residence: for to such shabby tricks, is the F. C. M. Society obliged to have recourse, not daring to speak out openly. However, the tutelary genius of the F. C. M. Society has for once abandoned it, and it has ventured upon what is commonly called the lie with a circumstance. Now, by the truth or falsity of the circumstance, we are enabled to test the truth or falsity of the whole of the contents of the Society's *Records*. Andre Solandt writes, and the F. C. M. Society,

by publishing, becomes responsible for the truth of a story in which the priest of St. R. is accused of falsely citing Scripture to a woman for the purpose of inducing her to let him (the priest) baptize her child. Had Andre Solandt done no more, we might have contradicted, but we could not have disproved his assertion. Fortunately, he has ventured to add a circumstance to his lie. He says that the priest, coming into the room in which a woman had been lately confined, did, immediately upon his arrival, administer the Sacrament to *all who would receive it*. The Catholic who reads this, perceives at once that the whole story is such a manifest impossibility, that only upon the supposition of the grossest ignorance on the part of the F. C. M. Society, as to the faith and discipline of the Catholic Church, could such a story have obtained admittance to the columns of the Society's *Records*. We, therefore, at once declared the whole statement of Andre Solandt to be an impudent lie. If the Society is not pleased with this language, we will point out to it a very easy way of revenging itself. Let it give the name of the parish where this event occurred, of the priest who administered, and of the Sacrament which he administered. But this it cannot—this it dare not attempt. Some way or other, the Society will find to shuffle out of this. "For shuffling is the badge of all their tribe." However that may be, we have made our charge clearly enough, and in plain English.

Again. In their *Records*, the Society makes a little girl speak foolishly, saying, "that the New Testament itself says, that nothing is to be added to it, and nothing taken away." By repeating this nonsense approvingly, the Society makes it its own. We tell it, that there is no passage in the New Testament which says that nothing is to be added to the New Testament, or nothing taken away, nor any which can bear such a construction. Let the Society disprove our assertion if it can. Till then, we are justified in concluding that the little children, who have the misfortune to be decoyed into the heresy-shops at Pointe aux Trembles, and elsewhere, have their tender minds corrupted by a most infamous system of perversion of Scripture. Will the Society dare to reply to this? We think not.

Again. The *Montreal Witness* is angry with us because we speak respectfully of the clergy of the Church of England,—(we always do so, when we speak of gentlemen)—and misstates the reasons which we adduced, to show that they could not, consistently with the allegiance they owe to their church—the obedience which they owe to their bishop—become or remain members of the F. C. M. Society. The reasons which we gave, were, that the dogmas of the church of England, whether right or wrong, are diametrically opposed, in many instances, to the teaching of the Society,—that no church of England-man can recognise any sect or society, destitute of the orders of bishop, priest and deacon, as forming a portion of the Church of Christ,—and lastly, that the Society taught pure Nestorianism, which consists in denying that the Virgin was the Mother of God, thus making a distinction of *persons* in Christ. Had J. Vessot taught that the Blessed Virgin was the Mother of Christ's human nature, as the *Montreal Witness* pretends, we should have contented ourselves with laughing at the folly of talking about the mother of a nature, and recommending him, as we recommend the writer in the *Montreal Witness*, to learn the difference, betwixt a *person* and a *nature*.

These were the reasons which we gave why no conscientious clergyman of the church of England could be a member of the F. C. M. Society. "I shall enter," said Bishop Fullford, last Sunday, "upon my work full of confidence and hope, because I shall enter upon it in faith. Faith in the divine institution in virtue of which I am invested with the holy office of Bishop—faith in the purity of the creed which I am pledged to uphold and teach—faith in the apostolical charter of the ministry and liturgy of the church." Thus speaks a conscientious and honest priest of the Anglican Church. With such faith no one would condescend to become a member of the F. C. M. Society.

One word in conclusion would we address to the writer in the *Montreal Witness*. He has earned for himself a reputation for great *prudence*, in the choice of those he attacks. He should be careful not to belie his character in this respect. He should remember that it is one thing to attack clergymen and to insult nuns, who, because of their sacred office or their sex, cannot reply,—and another to make use of the word falsehood to laymen. Does he wish to discredit us, he must begin by disproving our assertions: does he wish to defend the credit of the Colporteurs, he must prove their stories to be true. All the canting and whining in the world about those upright, single-hearted men, will avail neither him nor them. Facts and not phrases are what he must have recourse to. Not by accusing us