POPE ST. EUGENE I

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THE death of Pope Gregory the Great in 604 marked the end of an era in Roman history and the beginning of a century of chaos. Rome was still subject to the Emperor of Constantinople, who exercised his jurisdiction through the Exarch of Ravenna; but the imperial power was growing weaker in the city and at times seemed almost powerless against the increasing anarchy of the citizens. The Emperor could not nominate the Pope, as he could nominate the Patriarch of Constantinople, but the Pope-elect could not be consecrated without the Emperor's approval, and Pope Martin I, who dared to mount the papal throne without waiting for the imperial permission, soon paid a terrible price for his temerity.

The great doctrinal controversies of this century raged about the Monothelite heresy, which acknowledged but one will in Christ. This theory of Sergius, Patriarch of Constantinople, was largely a political expedient intended to win back the Monophysites, who held that the Council of Chalcedon had lapsed into Nestorianism when it defined that, even after the Incarnation, Christ has two complete natures, and who, by their opposition to the imperial policies, were proving a serious menace to the safety of the empire in its wars against the Persians and the Arabs. But like many another attempt to promote theological peace by imperial decree, Monothelitism was destined to increase rather than to diminish the disunion in the empire. The "Ecthesis," a Monothelite profession of faith published by Emperor Heraclius in 638, was revoked by his grandson, Constans II, because of the ill will that it produced; but Constans replaced it in 648 with the "Typus," a similar edict which ordered all bishops to approve and accept the theory of Sergius.

Pope Theodore died in May 649, some months after the publication of the "Typus," and his successor, Martin, ascended the papal throne two months later without waiting for the approval of the Emperor, who, by publishing the "Typus," had committed himself to the support of the heresy of the Monothelites. The new Pope promptly assembled one hundred and five bishops in a council at the Lateran which emphatically defended the two wills in Christ and

denounced the "scelerosus Typus" recently published by the emperor.[1] Pope Martin sent news of the council's decision to the bishops throughout the world, and even forwarded a copy of the conciliar decrees to the Emperor himself, whose anger at this open defiance of his orders can readily be imagined.

Even before he had received the decrees of the Lateran Council, Constans II had already taken steps to punish the newly-elected Pope. He wrote a letter to Olympius, Exarch of Ravenna, ordering him to proceed to Rome and, if he could rely on the loyalty of the Roman army, to capture Pope Martin.[2] Finding the Roman soldiers reluctant to take part in any action against their bishop, Olympius decided to murder him, and, when his plan miscarried, decided to take advantage of the weakness of the imperial authority to make himself independent of Constantinople. After negotiations with Pope Martin, who, later on in his trial for treason at Constantinople, denied any complicity in the revolt, Olympius led his troops to Sicily ostensibly to make war against the Saracens, but possibly to secure their aid against the Emperor.

Thus, for a time at least, the Emperor's anger was thwarted, but it only grew with the years, and when Olympius died of the plague in 652 the Emperor was again free to seek vengeance. On Saturday, June 15, 653, the new exarch, Kalliopas, arrived in Rome, and Pope Martin, who was in bed with the gout, had himself carried into the basilica of Constantine and placed before the high altar, where, surrounded by his loyal clergy, he awaited his fate. Before dawn on Monday morning a band of soldiers appeared and proceeded to search the church for concealed weapons. Finding that their victim was quite defenceless they returned to their master. Within half an hour they were back again, armed to the teeth and spoiling for a fight. They hacked down the lighted candles with their swords and made the darkened church re-echo with the clash of weapons and armor until they felt that the assembled clergy had been sufficiently terrified.[3]

[1] Cf. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Collectio*, X, 865–1184, for the acts of the Council.

[2] Cf. Duchesne, *Le Liber Pontificalis* (Paris, 1886), I, 337.

[3] Cf. Migne, *PL*, LXXXVII, 199–202. Fr. Paul Peeters questions the authenticity of these letters. He claims that Martin could not have written them, but may have written an account of his sufferings which Anastasius Bibliothecarius chose to present in the form of a series of letters; cf. *Analecta Bollandiana*, LI (1933), 225–52.

Then they seized the unresisting Pontiff and, after they had handed to his clergy an imperial decree which declared his election invalid, carried him off to the palace of the Exarch. The following night they secretly placed him on a boat in the Tiber and rushed him out of the city on his way to imprisonment at Constantinople and death as an exile in the Crimea.

On reading the decree handed to them by the soldiers, the Roman clergy found that it declared Martin deposed on the ground that he had illegally acquired the episcopacy and was unworthy of the Apostolic See. It also told them that Martin was to be taken to Constantinople as a prisoner and ordered them to proceed at once to the election of a new bishop to replace him.[4] We have no documents to tell us how they reacted to this decree. Apparently they were in no great hurry to comply with it, for almost a year passed before the election of a new Pope, who, after securing the imperial approval, ascended the papal throne on August 10, 654. He is known to history as Eugene I, one of four popes to bear the name, and he is one of the least-known of the many little-known Popes of the seventh century.

The twelve-line account of Pope Eugene in the *Liber Pontificalis* seems to be the only surviving record of his life by a contemporary.[5] It tells us that he was a Roman of the Aventine region, the son of a certain Rufinianus, and a cleric from his youth, but it tells us nothing else about his history before he became Pope. It tells us that he occupied the See of Rome for two years, nine months, and twenty-eight days, but it does not tell us anything of his status during the first thirteen months of that period when Pope Martin was still alive. It tells us that Eugene was kind, meek, gentle, affable, charitable to his clergy and the poor, and conspicuous for sanctity, but it does not discuss the possibility that he may have been responsible for allowing Pope Martin to starve to death in his place of exile. Finally, it tells us that the people and clergy of Rome would not permit Eugene to say Mass until he had promised that he would never accept the ambiguously worded profession of faith sent to him according to custom by Peter, the newly-appointed Patriarch of Constantinople, which made no reference whatever to Peter's stand on the burning question of Christ's two wills; but it does not tell us whether Eugene would

[4] Cf. Migne, *PL*, LXXXVII, 199–202. [5] Cf. Duchesne, *op. cit.* p. 341.

have been willing to compromise with the Monothelites if the Romans had been less determined. The sketch of Eugene in the *Liber Pontificalis* is more remarkable, therefore, for what it omits than for what it tells us.

Unfortunately the lack of contemporary documents makes it almost impossible to supply the omissions of the *Liber Pontificalis*. We may assume that Eugene was one of the Roman clergy who surrounded Pope Martin during the terrible night of his capture in the basilica of Constantine. His subsequent election as Pope at a time when the imperial troops had control of Rome, and the approval of his election by the Emperor, would suggest that he had not taken an active part in the opposition to the imperial efforts to force the Church to accept Monothelitism. But what are we to think of the validity of such an election in view of the fact that Pope Martin was still alive?[6]

The answer to this question will naturally depend to a considerable extent on one's views with regard to the chronology of the last years of Pope Martin's life. We know that Martin was carried off from Rome during the night of June 18, 653 and that he reached Constantinople on September 17, whence after a six months imprisonment, broken only by his trial for treason on December 20, he was banished to the Crimea.[7] But while the day and the month of his arrival at Constantinople is certain, authorities still disagree as to whether it was the year 653 or 654.[8] The disagreement arises from the following passage of a letter of Pope Martin as preserved in a Latin translation of Anastasius Bibliothecarius: "non autem Mesenae tantum, sed et in Calabria . . . sed et in plurimis insularum, in quibus nos vel tribus mensibus peccata impedierunt, nullam compassionem adeptus sum, excepto duntaxat in insula Naxia, quoniam ibi annum fecimus, merui lavari duobus vel tribus balneis, et apud urbem mansi in hospitio quodam."[9] Up to the time of Jaffé all the authors seem to

[6] We assume, of course, the common Catholic teaching that the Pope cannot be deposed by any state authority; cf. Wernz-Vidal, *Jus Canonicum* (Rome, 1923) II, 435–36.

[7] Cf. Jaffé-Wattenbach, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum* (Leipzig, 1885), I, 233–34.

[8] Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums* (Tübingen, 1933), II, 570, says 653. Fliche-Martin, *Histoire de l'Eglise* (Paris, 1934–), V, 171, and the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (Freiburg, 1930–), *s.v.* "Martin I", say 654.

[9] Migne, *PL*, LXXXVII, 202. Compare this passage with the corresponding passage in the newly-discovered Greek life of Martin published by Fr. Peeters in the *Analecta Bollandiana*, LI, 257. The Greek writer is clearly following the author whom Anastasius Bibliothecarius translated into Latin, and there can be no doubt that the "annum feci-

have assumed that the Pope spent three months at sea and a year at Naxos, thus arriving at Constantinople fifteen months after leaving Rome. Jaffé held that the words "tribus mensibus" meant that the whole trip, including the stay at Naxos, took three months, and consequently that the words "annum fecimus" were clearly a corruption of the text.[10] Duchesne, however, could see no reason for Jaffé's assumption, which does not yet seem to be universally accepted.[11] Now, we have a letter of Pope Martin's written shortly after his arrival in Constantinople in which he expresses the hope that the Romans will not elect a new bishop in his place. If Martin took fifteen months to reach Constantinople it is clear that this letter was written several months after the election of Eugene, and consequently that the election took place without Martin's knowledge and permission, whereas if he took but

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mus" of Anastasius is a mistranslation of the Greek word "χρονοτριβήσαντες." The reading "moram fecimus" instead of "annum fecimus" suggested by Fr. Emil Michael in the *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie*, XVI (1892), 380, is thus shown to be correct.

[10] Cf. Jaffé-Wattenbach, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

[11] Cf. Duchesne, *op. cit.*, p. 340. Nevertheless, the arguments in its favour are very strong. In an article in the *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie*, XVI (1892), 375–80, Fr. Emil Michael suggested four: 1) the antecedent improbability of such a long delay at Naxos without any imaginable reason for it; 2) the fact that Pope Martin, who liked to bathe frequently, had time to bathe only two or three times during his stay on the island; 3) Martin's letter from Constantinople which shows that he knew nothing of the election of a new Pope, something he would certainly have known if the letter was written in October 654, two months after Eugene had ascended the papal chair and several months after news of his election had been sent to Constantinople with a request for the Emperor's approval; 4) the failure of Martin's companion, who wrote a detailed account of his capture and subsequent sufferings, to mention the stay at Naxos.

Fr. Michael's proposed reading of "moram fecimus" instead of "annum fecimus" was later vindicated by the discovery of a Greek life of Martin which clearly shows that Anastasius mistranslated the word "χρονοτριβήσαντες." Cf. *Analecta Bollandiana*, LI (1933), 257. This becomes, therefore, perhaps the strongest argument against the year's stay at Naxos.

Finally, the year's stay at Naxos cannot be maintained if Paul, Patriarch of Constantinople, died in 653, for we know that Pope Martin had already been in the city for three months when Paul died at the end of December. Now, we know that Paul became Patriarch in 641, and Zonaras, Theophanes, and Nicephorus tell us that he was Patriarch for twelve years. This would place the year of his death in 653. However, in an article in the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, VII, 37, Brooks claims that Paul was Patriarch for thirteen years and died in 654. Fr. Devreesse, in the *Analecta Bollandiana*, XLVI (1928), 47–48 points out that the authorities quoted by Brooks point to 653 rather than to 654 as the year of Paul's death, and that Brooks refrained from following them because he accepted the "annum fecimus" of Anastasius and assumed that Martin had spent a year at Naxos.

three months to reach Constantinople the letter was written several months before Eugene's election and would not exclude the assumption that Martin gave permission for the election of his successor.

Baronius, who thought that Martin had remained a year at Naxos, and consequently that the election of Eugene had been held without his knowledge and permission, claimed that Eugene was merely a vicar with the right of succession and did not really become Pope until the death of Martin.[12] He gives no authority for his statement, and the contemporary author who wrote the brief sketch of Eugene in the *Liber Pontificalis* does not seem to have held it. Pagi, in his notes on Baronius, also rejects it.[13] This much, however, can be said for the opinion of Baronius, that the Roman clergy who elected Eugene can hardly have failed to recall a similar set of circumstances when Felix was elected to the place of the exiled Liberius only to be put out of office when Liberius returned to Rome.[14]

Grisar accepted Jaffé's opinion that Martin's stay at Naxos lasted but a short while, and consequently held that he was already an exile in the Crimea when Eugene was elected Pope.[15] He thinks it quite evident that Martin had previously resigned the papacy, and in proof he quotes Martin's letter to a friend in Constantinople in which he prays "especially for the Pastor who is now placed over" the Roman people, that is, for Eugene.[16] Now, it is certainly going too far to say that this passage makes it evident that Martin had resigned his office, but it does at least show that he did not object to the election of his successor when he knew of it. Would it be fair to assume that the election of Eugene not only received Martin's approval after the event but that it also had his previous permission? We think such an assumption highly probable. After his condemnation at Constantinople on a charge of treason, Martin must have realised that his chances of ever returning to Rome were negligible. He must have known, too, that the Emperor who had declared him deposed would not hesitate to appoint his successor if the Roman

[12] Cf. Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici* (Rome, 1599) VIII, 437.

[13] Cf. Pagi, *Critica in Annales Baronii* (Antwerp, 1705) III, 14.

[14] Cf. Duchesne, *op. cit.*, p. 207. The case of Popes Silverius and Vigil would also occur to them.

[15] Cf. *La Civiltà Cattolica*, III (1907), 277. [16] *Ibid.*, p. 657.

clergy failed to provide one, and that the imperial nominee would certainly be a Monothelite. Surely it is not unreasonable to suppose that in these circumstances such a saintly man as Martin would resign his office for the good of the whole Church and give his permission for the election of a new Pope. At any rate, neither Martin nor any of his contemporaries seems to have considered Eugene an anti-pope.

In endorsing the election of Eugene, the Emperor and his advisers may have hoped that they could induce the new Pope to co-operate with them in their efforts to promote Monothelitism. They were doubtless encouraged in this opinion by the ease with which the *apocrisiarii* sent by Eugene to Constantinople were won over to the new heresy.[17] Eugene, however, whether because of his own views or because of the resolute opposition of the Romans, proved just as unyielding as Pope Martin, and the imperial authorities in Constantinople soon decided to make him share the fate of his martyred predecessor. This we know from the words addressed to St. Maximus by the officials at his trial in Constantinople in September 656: "Know, Lord Abbot, that when we get a little rest from this rout of heathens (i.e., from the wars with the Saracens), by the Holy Trinity, we will treat as we are treating you the Pope who is now lifted up . . . and the rest of your disciples. And we will roast you all, each in his own place, as Pope Martin has been roasted."[18]

The reference to the roasting of Martin must not be taken literally. He seems to have died of starvation and misery brought on by neglect and poverty. His last letters from the Crimea show to what straits he had been reduced, and they prove clearly enough that he felt he had been neglected and forgotten by his friends, even by the Romans who should have been the first to help him.[19] But what was the cause of their failure to help him? Did they neglect him because they were unwilling or only because they were unable to send him the necessaries of life? The exile in the Crimea can have known little or nothing of conditions in Rome and Constantinople, and, in view of the Emperor's bitter animosity towards Martin, it seems only too likely that he prevented any attempt of the Romans to come to the aid of their former bishop. At any rate, there is no evidence to suggest that

[17] Cf. Mann, *Lives of the Popes* (London, 1925) I, 408.
[18] Cf. Migne, *PL*, CXXIX, 654. [19] Cf. Migne, *PL*, LXXXVII, 201–4.

Eugene was in any way responsible for the failure of Martin's friends to provide him with the necessaries of life. The contemporary who wrote Eugene's life in the *Liber Pontificalis* would surely not have spoken so highly of his generosity and charity if he even suspected that Eugene had been in any way responsible for the sufferings and death of Martin in his place of exile.

One other fact is known about the life of Pope Eugene which is of special interest to English-speaking readers. During his pontificate there came from England to Rome a young monk named Wilfrid, one of the first English-born pilgrims to the eternal city. Sent by the monks of Lindisfarne to study the ecclesiastical and monastic rites in use at Rome, he arrived in the city in 654 and was introduced to the Pope, who blessed him, and sent him home rejoicing.[20]

Pope Martin died on September 16, 655,[21] and within two years Eugene followed him to the grave, being saved by his early death from the vengeance which his enemies had sworn to wreak on him for following in the footsteps of his martyred predecessor. Martin seems to have been honored as a saint almost from the moment of his death, but the cultus of Eugene was of slower growth. The first edition of the Martyrology of Usuard, written around the year 860, did not include Eugene, but his name was soon added to it.

Unless new documents are some day brought to light, our knowledge of Eugene will remain incomplete and unsatisfactory. At present we know enough to make it reasonably certain that he was never an anti-pope, that he was in no way responsible for the death of his predecessor, Pope Martin, and that he was determined, even at the risk of his life, not to tolerate the heresy of the Monothelites. We are therefore justified in thinking that he was, as the *Liber Pontificalis* describes him, "benignus, mitis, mansuetus, omnibus affabilis et sanctitatis praeclarior," and therefore worthy of his high office in the Church of Christ and of his place in the calendar of the saints.

[20] Cf. Mann, *op. cit.*, p. 410.

[21] The Greek life of Martin published by Fr. Peeters claims that he died on April 13, 656; cf. *Analecta Bollandiana*, LI (1933), 261. The confusion arose, according to Fr. Peeters, owing to the transfer of the feast of St. Euphemia from April 13, to September 16 (*op. cit.*, p. 249).