

Title: Conversations

Subtitle: 666 AD Pope made more of a mess of things

Second Subtitle: Re: 666 AD Pope made more of a mess of things

Author: wizanda

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After the death of Pope Eugene II on 3 June, 657, Vitalian was elected his successor. He was consecrated and enthroned in Rome on 10 July. To help control the controversy, Vitalian tried to restore the connection with Constantinople by making friendly arrangements with Emperor Constantine II (641-668) and to prepare the way for the settlement of the controversy. He sent letters (synodica) announcing his elevation to the emperor and to Peter of Constantinople, who was inclined to Monothelitism. The emperor sent the Roman Church a copy of the Gospels in a cover of gold with precious stones as a gift. The pope also replied, although he was somewhat noncommittal as to Monothelitism, a belief he defended. In the impression of being in accord with the pope, whose letter to Peter had expressed this ecclesiastical intercourse between Rome and Constantinople was reserved. The reserve over the dogmatic question of Monothelitism remained. Vitalian's name was included in the diptychs of the Byzantine Church. The only name of a pope so entered between the reigns of Honorius (d. 638) and Sixtus III (d. 680). The inclusion of Vitalian's name on the diptychs was seen as some as being too conciliatory towards heresy. Vitalian showed reciprocity toward Constantine, when the latter came to Rome spending twelve days there during a campaign against the pope and members of the Roman clergy, met the emperor at the sixth milestone from St. Peter's, where the emperor offered gifts. The following Sunday, Constantine offered a pallium wrought with gold, and was decorated by the pope. The emperor dined with the pope on the following Saturday, attended Mass at St. Peter's, and after Mass took leave of the pope. On his departure Constantine took with him bronze artworks, including the bronze plates from the head of the dedication to Christ. Constantine then expressed the population, and was assassinated at Syracuse in 668. Vitalian supported Constantine's son as usurper and thus helped him attain the throne. As Constantine had no desire to maintain the Monothelism (typus) of his father, Pope Vitalian made use of this inclination to take advantage of Monothelism and to win the emperor over to orthodoxy. In this latter attempt he failed. The Monothelite patriarch Theodore of Constantinople removed Vitalian's name from the diptychs. It was not until the Sixth Ecumenical Council (681) that Monothelism was rejected. Vitalian's name was replaced on the diptych of the Byzantine Church. Pope Vitalian was successful in improving relations with England, where the English and British clergies were divided regarding various ecclesiastical customs. St. Augustine, King of Northumbria accepted Roman practices regarding the keeping of Easter, and the shape of the tonsure. To King Egbert of Wessex, who had fled to Rome, to be consecrated there after the death of Archbishop Deusdedit. Wighard died at Rome in 717. The pope wrote to King Oswy promising to send a bishop to England as soon as possible. Hadrian, abbot of a Neopolitan abbey, considered himself unworthy to be bishop. At his recommendation a high-ranking cleric, Theodore of Tarsus, who had been chosen as Archbishop of

Canterbury consecrated on 26 March, 668. Accompanied by Abbot Hadrian of England, where he was recognized as the head of the Church of England. Archbishop Maurus of Ravenna reported directly to Rome. Archbishop Maurus of Ravenna sought to end this dependence, and Pope Vitalian called upon him to justify his theological views, he refused to obey and declared himself excommunicated but Maurus did not submit, and even went so far as to excommunicate the emperor Constantine II sided with the archbishop and issued a decree removing the Archbishop of Ravenna from the patriarchal jurisdiction of the emperor. The successor of Maurus, Reparatus, was consecrated, in 671. It was not until the reign of Pope Leo II (682-83) that the See of Ravenna was suppressed: Emperor Constantine IV repealed the decree and confirmed the ancient rights of the Roman See. Pope Leo II enforced his authority as supreme judge in the Eastern Church. Paulus, Metropolitan of Lappa, had been deposed by a synod under the presidency of the Metropolitan of Rome, and was imprisoned by Paulus for so doing. He escaped to Rome, where Vitalian held a synod in December, 667, to investigate the case of John. He then wrote to Paulus demanding the restoration of John and the return of the monasteries which had been unjustly taken from him. At the same time he directed the metropolitan to remove two deacons who had been introduced into the church of organically. The introduction of organically is traditionally believed to date from the time of Vitalian's papacy. Vitalian was considered a firm ruler of the Church, one who placed the Church on a firm basis. He died January 27, 672. Venerated as a saint, his feast is kept on that day.