

MONOTHELITISM

For Egypt and the Coptic church, monothelitism may be taken simply as a continuation of the monenergist crisis with which imperial power in Egypt ended. At CONSTANTINOPLE, two councils in 638 and 639 accepted the ECTHESIS of Emperor Heraclius (610-641). As in other efforts over the previous two centuries to find agreement on a formula reconciling the divergent views held in Alexandria, Constantinople, and [Rome](#) concerning the Person of Christ, the attempt to define this as to be acknowledged in two natures moved by a single activity (*energeia*) failed.

With the death of Sophronius, patriarch of Jerusalem, in 638, the leadership of the opposition to the emperor's creed passed to a monk, Maximus the Confessor. There followed a long and embittered controversy that involved the surviving Byzantine province in North [Africa](#) as well as the Roman see. The climax came with the debate between Maximus and Pyrrhus, former patriarch of Constantinople, at Carthage in 645, which resulted in a victory for Maximus and condemnation of the view that in Christ there was one activating principle (*energeia*) and one will (*thelema*). The papacy also turned against Constantinople, though largely on the grounds of ecclesiastical discipline, in that Pyrrhus had been called *sanctissimus*, a title to which Pope [Theodore](#) I considered he had no claim.

In 648 Emperor Constans II (642-668) replaced the *Ecthesis* with a new document known as the *Typos*. In this he rejected both the monothelitic and the dyothelitic ("two wills") formulas and forbade their use. At Rome, Pope [Theodore](#) summoned a council of 150 bishops at the Lateran Palace in 649, and there the monothelite doctrine was condemned. Both "the most impious *Ecthesis*" and "the damnable *Typos*" were denounced, and the existence of two wills in Christ associated with His two natures was proclaimed.

The long wars between the Byzantines and Arabs distracted the attention

of successive emperors from the issue, and the controversy was not settled until the Third Council of Constantinople (sixth general council), which met in 680-681. It was agreed after long debate that in Christ there were indeed two wills, human and divine, perfectly united.

While the issues in the monothelite controversy closely resembled those of MONOPHYSITISM, Egypt had come under [Arab](#) occupation in 645 and was only marginally affected.

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H. C. FREND

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