

ost veneration as if it had been drawn up by heaven itself and had been sent to him on the part of God. He added, that whoever would not submit should be banished as a rebel to a divine decision. This menace reduced to obedience Arius and the followers of his doctrine, who till then had refused to subscribe to the decision of the council. Constantine afterwards dispatched two letters one encyclical, addressed to the churches in general, the other to the church of Alexandria, where the heresy had first appeared. In the first are found these words:

Whatever is done in the councils of the bishops ought to be considered as the will of God.* And in the second, after enumerating the tumults, disorders, and schisms that the heresy had produced, he adds, "It was in order to put an end to all these that, by the will of God, I assembled so great a number of bishops at Nice." And at the conclusion, "What three hundred bishops have ordained is nothing else than the sentence of the only Son of God, the Holy Spirit has declared the will of God by means of these great men, whom he inspired. Therefore let no one doubt, let no one delay, but all of you return in good earnest into the way of truth."* Before he dismissed them, he reassembled the bishops in his palace, where he delivered to them an excellent discourse to recommend to them the peace of the church, which they would preserve by preserving inviolably amongst themselves a perfect union of mind and heart in unity of doctrine and sentiment, conformably with what the Holy Spirit had just established by their means in the council.

Eusebius, of Cesarea, who a long time opposed the word consubstantial, afterwards wrote the life of Constantine, in which he praises his indefatigable zeal to secure the superiority of that salutary faith which the Holy Spirit himself had truly promulgated by the holy fathers assembled at Nice.

After the condemnation of Arius, they examined the question of the paschal solemnity; all the fathers agreed to observe it on the same day, and the orientals promised to conform to the practice of all the other churches, that is to say, of Italy, of Africa, of Lybia, of Egypt, of Spain, the Gauls, Britain, Greece, Asia, and Pontus. "The council of Nice," says Athanasius in his apology, "has been doubly useful, because these people of Syria, Lybia, and Mesopotamia, had not been accustomed to celebrate the pasch on the proper day, and because the Arian heresy had arisen against the Church. The catholic world assembled in council. The day of the pasch was regulated for all, and Arianism was condemned. It is true that for the day of the pasch they used these terms, it hath seemed good to us, after the example of the apostles, in order that all the world may obey—but to regulate faith they said: the Catholic Church believes; and immediately they add the entire confession, to shew

*Thus it was that the decision of the council was proposed as a divine oracle after which there was nothing more to be examined, for we are not to doubt that these letters of the Emperor were dictated by the bishops, or at least drawn up according to their instructions. This is the reflection made by the judicious Fleury, after introducing the letters of the Emperor.

that it was not a new doctrine, but that of the apostles, and that what they had put down in writing was not their own invention, but derived from the apostles."

But if afterwards Arius and some of his adherents retracted their word and the obedience they had sworn, the passions incident to men explain this perjury but too well; we should doubtless lament it and deplore the fatal consequences it produced upon the unfortunate reigns of Constantius and Valens. But it is enough for our present purpose to know that Arius and his partizans had recognized this authority before it explained itself, and that they themselves had afterwards submitted to its decision, and that they did not venture to revolt against it, for a considerable time after their condemnation. With regard to the other bishops in various parts, who had not been able to assist at the council, they almost all applauded its decrees; the most enlightened doctors took up the defence of them, immediately they were called in question, and generally all nations conformed to them. The Nicene Creed, already adopted by the universal Church was for the second time universally proclaimed at the council of Constantinople, and there received the additions made necessary by the heresy of Macedonius against the Holy Ghost. From the other age, it was publicly recited in the Greek churches, according to the ordinance of Timotheus, patriarch of Constantinople; sung in the Churches of Spain, according to the form of the Oriental churches, by the decree of the council of Toledo: in the Gauls and Germany towards the end of the eighth century, towards the year 1014; and in all Italy by the constitution of Benadict VIII, in fine it has been kept by the reformation: and in our days it is still held in honor among almost all protestant communions.

And to say a word upon the particular opinion of the most celebrated doctors of the Church, the learned Eusebius of Cesarea, who in the Council, held out a long time against the term consubstantial was not on first account prevented from writing afterwards, that the Holy Spirit himself had truly promulgated the faith, by the instrumentality of the fathers of Nice. He had already reckoned among the evils inflicted by Licinius on the church, the prohibition to assemble councils. "For," adds the historian, "important controversies can never be terminated without a synod." We know with what strength, spirit and eloquence Athanasius supported during a struggle of 60 years, against the Semiarians, the decisions of the council of Nice. Threatened with exile when in his see, and with death in his exile, he evinced the same courage and had not less credit at the extremities of the Gauls, at Treves, than in Egypt, and at Alexandria. From all the places where he was constrained to take refuge, he combated with unshaken firmness that heresy armed as it was with the power of two Emperors, and many times in synod carried off in triumph the formula of Nice, as the rule of the orthodox faith. He calls it the word of God, the divine and sacred oracle of the holy Spirit. "What can be wanting to the council of Nice that we can desire

further? The Indians are not ignorant of it, and all the christians of barbarous countries revere it. The word of God, who has spoken by this oecumenical council, will remain for ever." See now how he commences the profession of faith, which the Emperor Jovian had demanded of him in 363, after the agitated and unfortunate reigns of Constantius and Julian. "Know then, O Emperor, that the faith which the fathers of Nice have acknowledged, is the faith that has been preached from the beginning; know that it is followed by all the Churches of the world, whether in Spain or in England, in the Gauls, in all Italy, in Dalmatia, Dacia, Mysia, Macedonia and all Greece, in Pamphylia, Lycia, Isauria, Egypt, Lybia, Pontus and Cappadocia. To these we must add all our neighbouring Churches, as well as those of the east, except a small number, who are in the party of the Arians. We know all those whom we have just named and others still more distant: we even have letters from them." Cyril of Alexandria expresses himself of the fathers of Nice with the same veneration. "Truly, with them was Jesus Christ, who said, when two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them, for how should we be permitted to doubt that Jesus Christ himself invisible presided over this great and holy assembly?" St. Hilary, St. Basil, and St. Jerome hold the same language. St. Ambrose whose sentiments ought to be discoverable in every christian heart, hesitated not to declare: "I embrace the decrees of Nice, from which neither death nor the sword shall separate me." Saint Augustine calls it "the council of the world, whose decrees are equal to the divine commandments." Speaking of the error of Saint Cyprian upon rebaptisation, he says, that "this holy martyr would have adhered to the decision of the Church, if the truth had been cleared up and declared in his time by a general council," as it afterwards was at Arles and Nice. From these principles, which are also ours, this great man concluded in another passage, as we also conclude with him, "that disputes may be tolerated before the matter is decided by the authority of the church, but that to dispute after such decision, is to root up the foundation of the Church itself.

Pope Leo declares that, "they could never be reckoned among catholics, who would not follow the definitions of the venerable synod of Nice, or the regulations of the great council of Chalcedon." "I declare, (wrote Gregory the Great) that I receive and venerate the four first general councils, as the four books of the holy gospel." Socrates, who wrote his ecclesiastical history a century after the council, says, that "the fathers of Nice, although for the greater part simple and unlearned, could not fall into error; because they were enlightened by the light of the Holy Spirit."

It would certainly be very easy, were it not long and tedious, to produce here many other passages which the writings of the fathers of the Church furnish upon this subject. You will perhaps be more pleased to learn that the authority of the fathers of Nice has found defenders even amongst