

II. The devotion of individuals was the first circumstance which distinguished the Christians from the Platonists: the second was the authority of the church. The disciples of philosophy asserted the rights of intellectual freedom, and their respect for the sentiments of their teachers was a liberal and voluntary tribute, which they offered to superior reason. But the Christians formed a numerous and disciplined society; and the jurisdiction of their laws and magistrates was strictly exercised over the minds of the faithful. The loose wanderings of the imagination were gradually confined by creeds and confessions; [40] the freedom of private judgment submitted to the public wisdom of synods; the authority of a theologian was determined by his ecclesiastical rank; and the episcopal successors of the apostles inflicted the censures of the church on those who deviated from the orthodox belief. But in an age of religious controversy, every act of oppression adds new force to the elastic vigor of the mind; and the zeal or obstinacy of a spiritual rebel was sometimes stimulated by secret motives of ambition or avarice. A metaphysical argument became the cause or pretence of political contests; the subtleties of the Platonic school were used as the badges of popular factions, and the distance which separated their respective tenets were enlarged or magnified by the acrimony of dispute. As long as the dark heresies of Praxeas and Sabellius labored to confound the Father with the Son, [41] the orthodox party might be excused if they adhered more strictly and more earnestly to the distinction, than to the equality, of the divine persons. But as soon as the heat of controversy

had subsided, and the progress of the Sabellians was no longer an object of terror to the churches of Rome, of Africa, or of Egypt, the tide of theological opinion began to flow with a gentle but steady motion towards the contrary extreme; and the most orthodox doctors allowed themselves the use of the terms and definitions which had been censured in the mouth of the sectaries. [42] After the edict of toleration had restored peace and leisure to the Christians, the Trinitarian controversy was revived in the ancient seat of Platonism, the learned, the opulent, the tumultuous city of Alexandria; and the flame of religious discord was rapidly communicated from the schools to the clergy, the people, the province, and the East. The abstruse question of the eternity of the Logos was agitated in ecclesiastic conferences and popular sermons; and the heterodox opinions of Arius [43] were soon made public by his own zeal, and by that of his adversaries. His most implacable adversaries have acknowledged the learning and blameless life of that eminent presbyter, who, in a former election, had declared, and perhaps generously declined, his pretensions to the episcopal throne. [44] His competitor Alexander assumed the office of his judge. The important cause was argued before him; and if at first he seemed to hesitate, he at length pronounced his final sentence, as an absolute rule of faith. [45] The undaunted presbyter, who presumed to resist the authority of his angry bishop, was separated from the community of the church. But the pride of Arius was supported by the applause of a numerous party. He reckoned among his immediate followers two bishops of Egypt, seven presbyters, twelve deacons, and (what may appear almost incredible) seven hundred virgins. A large majority of the bishops of

Asia appeared to support or favor his cause; and their measures were conducted by Eusebius of Caesarea, the most learned of the Christian prelates; and by Eusebius of Nicomedia, who had acquired the reputation of a statesman without forfeiting that of a saint. Synods in Palestine and Bithynia were opposed to the synods of Egypt. The attention of the prince and people was attracted by this theological dispute; and the decision, at the end of six years, [46] was referred to the supreme authority of the general council of Nice.

[Footnote 40: The most ancient creeds were drawn up with the greatest latitude. See Bull, (*Judicium Eccles. Cathol.*), who tries to prevent Episcopius from deriving any advantage from this observation.]

[Footnote 41: The heresies of Praxeas, Sabellius, &c., are accurately explained by Mosheim (p. 425, 680-714.) Praxeas, who came to Rome about the end of the second century, deceived, for some time, the simplicity of the bishop, and was confuted by the pen of the angry Tertullian.]

[Footnote 42: Socrates acknowledges, that the heresy of Arius proceeded from his strong desire to embrace an opinion the most diametrically opposite to that of Sabellius.]

[Footnote 43: The figure and manners of Arius, the character and numbers of his first proselytes, are painted in very lively colors by Epiphanius, (tom. i. *Haeres. lxi. 3*, p. 729,) and we cannot but regret that he should soon forget the historian, to assume the task of

controversy.]

[Footnote 44: See Philostorgius (l. i. c. 3,) and Godefroy's ample Commentary. Yet the credibility of Philostorgius is lessened, in the eyes of the orthodox, by his Arianism; and in those of rational critics, by his passion, his prejudice, and his ignorance.]

[Footnote 45: Sozomen (l. i. c. 15) represents Alexander as indifferent, and even ignorant, in the beginning of the controversy; while Socrates (l. i. c. 5) ascribes the origin of the dispute to the vain curiosity of his theological speculations. Dr. Jortin (Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 178) has censured, with his usual freedom, the conduct of Alexander.]

[Footnote 46: The flames of Arianism might burn for some time in secret; but there is reason to believe that they burst out with violence as early as the year 319. Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. vi. p. 774-780.]

When the mysteries of the Christian faith were dangerously exposed to public debate, it might be observed, that the human understanding was capable of forming three distinct, though imperfect systems, concerning the nature of the Divine Trinity; and it was pronounced, that none of these systems, in a pure and absolute sense, were exempt from heresy and error. [47] I. According to the first hypothesis, which was maintained by Arius and his disciples, the Logos was a dependent and spontaneous production, created from nothing by the

will of the father. The Son, by whom all things were made, [48] had been begotten before all worlds, and the longest of the astronomical periods could be compared only as a fleeting moment to the extent of his duration; yet this duration was not infinite, [49] and there had been a time which preceded the ineffable generation of the Logos. On this only-begotten Son, the Almighty Father had transfused his ample spirit, and impressed the effulgence of his glory. Visible image of invisible perfection, he saw, at an immeasurable distance beneath his feet, the thrones of the brightest archangels; yet he shone only with a reflected light, and, like the sons of the Romans emperors, who were invested with the titles of Caesar or Augustus, [50] he governed the universe in obedience to the will of his Father and Monarch. II. In the second hypothesis, the Logos possessed all the inherent, incommunicable perfections, which religion and philosophy appropriate to the Supreme God. Three distinct and infinite minds or substances, three coequal and coeternal beings, composed the Divine Essence; [51] and it would have implied contradiction, that any of them should not have existed, or that they should ever cease to exist. [52] The advocates of a system which seemed to establish three independent Deities, attempted to preserve the unity of the First Cause, so conspicuous in the design and order of the world, by the perpetual concord of their administration, and the essential agreement of their will. A faint resemblance of this unity of action may be discovered in the societies of men, and even of animals. The causes which disturb their harmony, proceed only from the imperfection and inequality of their faculties; but the omnipotence which is guided by infinite wisdom and goodness, cannot fail of choosing

the same means for the accomplishment of the same ends. III. Three beings, who, by the self-derived necessity of their existence, possess all the divine attributes in the most perfect degree; who are eternal in duration, infinite in space, and intimately present to each other, and to the whole universe; irresistibly force themselves on the astonished mind, as one and the same being, [53] who, in the economy of grace, as well as in that of nature, may manifest himself under different forms, and be considered under different aspects. By this hypothesis, a real substantial trinity is refined into a trinity of names, and abstract modifications, that subsist only in the mind which conceives them. The Logos is no longer a person, but an attribute; and it is only in a figurative sense that the epithet of Son can be applied to the eternal reason, which was with God from the beginning, and by which, not by whom, all things were made. The incarnation of the Logos is reduced to a mere inspiration of the Divine Wisdom, which filled the soul, and directed all the actions, of the man Jesus. Thus, after revolving around the theological circle, we are surprised to find that the Sabellian ends where the Ebionite had begun; and that the incomprehensible mystery which excites our adoration, eludes our inquiry. [54]

[Footnote 47: Quid credidit? Certe, aut tria nomina audiens tres Deos esse credidit, et idololatra effectus est; aut in tribus vocabulis trinominem credens Deum, in Sabellii haeresim incurrit; aut edoctus ab Arianis unum esse verum Deum Patrem, filium et spiritum sanctum credidit creaturas. Aut extra haec quid credere potuerit nescio. Hieronym adv. Luciferianos. Jerom reserves for the last the orthodox system, which is

more complicated and difficult.]

[Footnote 48: As the doctrine of absolute creation from nothing was gradually introduced among the Christians, (Beausobre, tom. ii. p. 165-215,) the dignity of the workman very naturally rose with that of the work.]

[Footnote 49: The metaphysics of Dr. Clarke (Scripture Trinity, p. 276-280) could digest an eternal generation from an infinite cause.]

[Footnote 50: This profane and absurd simile is employed by several of the primitive fathers, particularly by Athenagoras, in his Apology to the emperor Marcus and his son; and it is alleged, without censure, by Bull himself. See Defens. Fid. Nicen. sect. iii. c. 5, No. 4.]

[Footnote 51: See Cudworth's Intellectual System, p. 559, 579. This dangerous hypothesis was countenanced by the two Gregories, of Nyssa and Nazianzen, by Cyril of Alexandria, John of Damascus, &c. See Cudworth, p. 603. Le Clerc, Bibliotheque Universelle, tom xviii. p. 97-105.]

[Footnote 52: Augustin seems to envy the freedom of the Philosophers. Liberis verbis loquuntur philosophi.... Nos autem non dicimus duo vel tria principia, duos vel tres Deos. De Civitat. Dei, x. 23.]

[Footnote 53: Boetius, who was deeply versed in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, explains the unity of the Trinity by the indifference of

the three persons. See the judicious remarks of Le Clerc, *Bibliothèque Choisie*, tom. xvi. p. 225, &c.]

[Footnote 54: If the Sabellians were startled at this conclusion, they were driven another precipice into the confession, that the Father was born of a virgin, that he had suffered on the cross; and thus deserved the epithet of Patripassians, with which they were branded by their adversaries. See the invectives of Tertullian against Praxeas, and the temperate reflections of Mosheim, (p. 423, 681;) and Beausobre, tom. i. l. iii. c. 6, p. 533.]

If the bishops of the council of Nice [55] had been permitted to follow the unbiased dictates of their conscience, Arius and his associates could scarcely have flattered themselves with the hopes of obtaining a majority of votes, in favor of an hypothesis so directly averse to the two most popular opinions of the Catholic world. The Arians soon perceived the danger of their situation, and prudently assumed those modest virtues, which, in the fury of civil and religious dissensions, are seldom practised, or even praised, except by the weaker party. They recommended the exercise of Christian charity and moderation; urged the incomprehensible nature of the controversy, disclaimed the use of any terms or definitions which could not be found in the Scriptures; and offered, by very liberal concessions, to satisfy their adversaries without renouncing the integrity of their own principles. The victorious faction received all their proposals with haughty suspicion; and anxiously sought for some irreconcilable mark of distinction,

the rejection of which might involve the Arians in the guilt and consequences of heresy. A letter was publicly read, and ignominiously torn, in which their patron, Eusebius of Nicomedia, ingenuously confessed, that the admission of the Homoousion, or Consubstantial, a word already familiar to the Platonists, was incompatible with the principles of their theological system. The fortunate opportunity was eagerly embraced by the bishops, who governed the resolutions of the synod; and, according to the lively expression of Ambrose, [56] they used the sword, which heresy itself had drawn from the scabbard, to cut off the head of the hated monster. The consubstantiality of the Father and the Son was established by the council of Nice, and has been unanimously received as a fundamental article of the Christian faith, by the consent of the Greek, the Latin, the Oriental, and the Protestant churches. But if the same word had not served to stigmatize the heretics, and to unite the Catholics, it would have been inadequate to the purpose of the majority, by whom it was introduced into the orthodox creed. This majority was divided into two parties, distinguished by a contrary tendency to the sentiments of the Tritheists and of the Sabellians. But as those opposite extremes seemed to overthrow the foundations either of natural or revealed religion, they mutually agreed to qualify the rigor of their principles; and to disavow the just, but invidious, consequences, which might be urged by their antagonists. The interest of the common cause inclined them to join their numbers, and to conceal their differences; their animosity was softened by the healing counsels of toleration, and their disputes were suspended by the use of the mysterious Homoousion, which either party was free to interpret

according to their peculiar tenets. The Sabellian sense, which, about fifty years before, had obliged the council of Antioch [57] to prohibit this celebrated term, had endeared it to those theologians who entertained a secret but partial affection for a nominal Trinity. But the more fashionable saints of the Arian times, the intrepid Athanasius, the learned Gregory Nazianzen, and the other pillars of the church, who supported with ability and success the Nicene doctrine, appeared to consider the expression of substance as if it had been synonymous with that of nature; and they ventured to illustrate their meaning, by affirming that three men, as they belong to the same common species, are consubstantial, or homoousian to each other. [58] This pure and distinct equality was tempered, on the one hand, by the internal connection, and spiritual penetration which indissolubly unites the divine persons; [59] and, on the other, by the preeminence of the Father, which was acknowledged as far as it is compatible with the independence of the Son. [60] Within these limits, the almost invisible and tremulous ball of orthodoxy was allowed securely to vibrate. On either side, beyond this consecrated ground, the heretics and the daemons lurked in ambush to surprise and devour the unhappy wanderer. But as the degrees of theological hatred depend on the spirit of the war, rather than on the importance of the controversy, the heretics who degraded, were treated with more severity than those who annihilated, the person of the Son. The life of Athanasius was consumed in irreconcilable opposition to the impious madness of the Arians; [61] but he defended above twenty years the Sabellianism of Marcellus of Ancyra; and when at last he was compelled to withdraw himself from his communion, he continued to

mention, with an ambiguous smile, the venial errors of his respectable friend. [62]

[Footnote 55: The transactions of the council of Nice are related by the ancients, not only in a partial, but in a very imperfect manner. Such a picture as Fra Paolo would have drawn, can never be recovered; but such rude sketches as have been traced by the pencil of bigotry, and that of reason, may be seen in Tillemont, (Mem. Eccles. tom. v. p. 669-759,) and in Le Clerc, (Bibliothèque Universelle, tom. x p. 435-454.)]

[Footnote 56: We are indebted to Ambrose (De Fide, l. iii.) knowledge of this curious anecdote. Hoc verbum quod viderunt adversariis esse formidini; ut ipsis gladio, ipsum nefandae caput haereseos.]

[Footnote 57: See Bull, Defens. Fid. Nicen. sect. ii. c. i. p. 25-36. He thinks it his duty to reconcile two orthodox synods.]

[Footnote 58: According to Aristotle, the stars were homoousian to each other. "That Homoousios means of one substance in kind, hath been shown by Petavius, Curcellaeus, Cudworth, Le Clerc, &c., and to prove it would be actum agere." This is the just remark of Dr. Jortin, (vol. ii p. 212,) who examines the Arian controversy with learning, candor, and ingenuity.]

[Footnote 59: See Petavius, (Dogm. Theolog. tom. ii. l. iv. c. 16, p. 453, &c.) Cudworth, (p. 559,) Bull, (sect. iv. p. 285-290, edit.

Grab.) The circumincesso, is perhaps the deepest and darkest he whole theological abyss.]

[Footnote 60: The third section of Bull's Defence of the Nicene Faith, which some of his antagonists have called nonsense, and others heresy, is consecrated to the supremacy of the Father.]

[Footnote 61: The ordinary appellation with which Athanasius and his followers chose to compliment the Arians, was that of Ariomanites.]

[Footnote 62: Epiphanius, tom i. Haeres. lxxii. 4, p. 837. See the adventures of Marcellus, in Tillemont, (Mem. Eccles. tom. v. i. p. 880-899.) His work, in one book, of the unity of God, was answered in the three books, which are still extant, of Eusebius.----After a long and careful examination, Petavius (tom. ii. l. i. c. 14, p. 78) has reluctantly pronounced the condemnation of Marcellus.]

The authority of a general council, to which the Arians themselves had been compelled to submit, inscribed on the banners of the orthodox party the mysterious characters of the word Homoousion, which essentially contributed, notwithstanding some obscure disputes, some nocturnal combats, to maintain and perpetuate the uniformity of faith, or at least of language. The consubstantialists, who by their success have deserved and obtained the title of Catholics, gloried in the simplicity and steadiness of their own creed, and insulted the repeated variations of their adversaries, who were destitute of any certain rule of faith. The

sincerity or the cunning of the Arian chiefs, the fear of the laws or of the people, their reverence for Christ, their hatred of Athanasius, all the causes, human and divine, that influence and disturb the counsels of a theological faction, introduced among the sectaries a spirit of discord and inconstancy, which, in the course of a few years, erected eighteen different models of religion, [63] and avenged the violated dignity of the church. The zealous Hilary, [64] who, from the peculiar hardships of his situation, was inclined to extenuate rather than to aggravate the errors of the Oriental clergy, declares, that in the wide extent of the ten provinces of Asia, to which he had been banished, there could be found very few prelates who had preserved the knowledge of the true God. [65] The oppression which he had felt, the disorders of which he was the spectator and the victim, appeased, during a short interval, the angry passions of his soul; and in the following passage, of which I shall transcribe a few lines, the bishop of Poitiers unwarily deviates into the style of a Christian philosopher. "It is a thing," says Hilary, "equally deplorable and dangerous, that there are as many creeds as opinions among men, as many doctrines as inclinations, and as many sources of blasphemy as there are faults among us; because we make creeds arbitrarily, and explain them as arbitrarily. The Homoousion is rejected, and received, and explained away by successive synods. The partial or total resemblance of the Father and of the Son is a subject of dispute for these unhappy times. Every year, nay, every moon, we make new creeds to describe invisible mysteries. We repent of what we have done, we defend those who repent, we anathematize those whom we defended. We condemn either the doctrine of others in ourselves, or our

own in that of others; and reciprocally tearing one another to pieces, we have been the cause of each other's ruin." [66]

[Footnote 63: Athanasius, in his epistle concerning the Synods of Seleucia and Rimini, (tom. i. p. 886-905,) has given an ample list of Arian creeds, which has been enlarged and improved by the labors of the indefatigable Tillemont, (Mem. Eccles. tom. vi. p. 477.)]

[Footnote 64: Erasmus, with admirable sense and freedom, has delineated the just character of Hilary. To revise his text, to compose the annals of his life, and to justify his sentiments and conduct, is the province of the Benedictine editors.]

[Footnote 65: Absque episcopo Eleusio et paucis cum eo, ex majore parte Asianae decem provinciae, inter quas consisto, vere Deum nesciunt. Atque utinam penitus nescirent! cum procliviore enim venia ignorarent quam obtrectarent. Hilar. de Synodis, sive de Fide Orientalium, c. 63, p. 1186, edit. Benedict. In the celebrated parallel between atheism and superstition, the bishop of Poitiers would have been surprised in the philosophic society of Bayle and Plutarch.]

[Footnote 66: Hilarius ad Constantium, l. i. c. 4, 5, p. 1227, 1228. This remarkable passage deserved the attention of Mr. Locke, who has transcribed it (vol. iii. p. 470) into the model of his new common-place book.]

It will not be expected, it would not perhaps be endured, that I should swell this theological digression, by a minute examination of the eighteen creeds, the authors of which, for the most part, disclaimed the odious name of their parent Arius. It is amusing enough to delineate the form, and to trace the vegetation, of a singular plant; but the tedious detail of leaves without flowers, and of branches without fruit, would soon exhaust the patience, and disappoint the curiosity, of the laborious student. One question, which gradually arose from the Arian controversy, may, however, be noticed, as it served to produce and discriminate the three sects, who were united only by their common aversion to the Homousion of the Nicene synod. 1. If they were asked whether the Son was like unto the Father, the question was resolutely answered in the negative, by the heretics who adhered to the principles of Arius, or indeed to those of philosophy; which seem to establish an infinite difference between the Creator and the most excellent of his creatures. This obvious consequence was maintained by Aetius, [67] on whom the zeal of his adversaries bestowed the surname of the Atheist. His restless and aspiring spirit urged him to try almost every profession of human life. He was successively a slave, or at least a husbandman, a travelling tinker, a goldsmith, a physician, a schoolmaster, a theologian, and at last the apostle of a new church, which was propagated by the abilities of his disciple Eunomius. [68] Armed with texts of Scripture, and with captious syllogisms from the logic of Aristotle, the subtle Aetius had acquired the fame of an invincible disputant, whom it was impossible either to silence or to convince. Such talents engaged the friendship of the Arian bishops, till

they were forced to renounce, and even to persecute, a dangerous ally, who, by the accuracy of his reasoning, had prejudiced their cause in the popular opinion, and offended the piety of their most devoted followers.

2. The omnipotence of the Creator suggested a specious and respectful solution of the likeness of the Father and the Son; and faith might humbly receive what reason could not presume to deny, that the Supreme God might communicate his infinite perfections, and create a being similar only to himself. [69] These Arians were powerfully supported by the weight and abilities of their leaders, who had succeeded to the management of the Eusebian interest, and who occupied the principal thrones of the East. They detested, perhaps with some affectation, the impiety of Aetius; they professed to believe, either without reserve, or according to the Scriptures, that the Son was different from all other creatures, and similar only to the Father. But they denied, the he was either of the same, or of a similar substance; sometimes boldly justifying their dissent, and sometimes objecting to the use of the word substance, which seems to imply an adequate, or at least, a distinct, notion of the nature of the Deity.

3. The sect which deserted the doctrine of a similar substance, was the most numerous, at least in the provinces of Asia; and when the leaders of both parties were assembled in the council of Seleucia, [70] their opinion would have prevailed by a majority of one hundred and five to forty-three bishops. The Greek word, which was chosen to express this mysterious resemblance, bears so close an affinity to the orthodox symbol, that the profane of every age have derided the furious contests which the difference of a single diphthong excited between the Homoousians and the Homoiousians. As it frequently

happens, that the sounds and characters which approach the nearest to each other accidentally represent the most opposite ideas, the observation would be itself ridiculous, if it were possible to mark any real and sensible distinction between the doctrine of the Semi-Arians, as they were improperly styled, and that of the Catholics themselves. The bishop of Poitiers, who in his Phrygian exile very wisely aimed at a coalition of parties, endeavors to prove that by a pious and faithful interpretation, [71] the Homoiousion may be reduced to a consubstantial sense. Yet he confesses that the word has a dark and suspicious aspect; and, as if darkness were congenial to theological disputes, the Semi-Arians, who advanced to the doors of the church, assailed them with the most unrelenting fury.

[Footnote 67: In Philostorgius (l. iii. c. 15) the character and adventures of Aetius appear singular enough, though they are carefully softened by the hand of a friend. The editor, Godefroy, (p. 153,) who was more attached to his principles than to his author, has collected the odious circumstances which his various adversaries have preserved or invented.]

[Footnote 68: According to the judgment of a man who respected both these sectaries, Aetius had been endowed with a stronger understanding and Eunomius had acquired more art and learning. (Philostorgius l. viii. c. 18.) The confession and apology of Eunomius (Fabricius, Bibliot. Graec. tom. viii. p. 258-305) is one of the few heretical pieces which have escaped.]

[Footnote 69: Yet, according to the opinion of Estius and Bull, (p. 297,) there is one power--that of creation--which God cannot communicate to a creature. Estius, who so accurately defined the limits of Omnipotence was a Dutchman by birth, and by trade a scholastic divine. Dupin Bibliot. Eccles. tom. xvii. p. 45.]

[Footnote 70: Sabinus ap. Socrat. (l. ii. c. 39) had copied the acts: Athanasius and Hilary have explained the divisions of this Arian synod; the other circumstances which are relative to it are carefully collected by Baro and Tillemont]

[Footnote 71: Fidei et pia intelligentia... De Synod. c. 77, p. 1193. In his his short apologetical notes (first published by the Benedictines from a MS. of Chartres) he observes, that he used this cautious expression, qui intelligerum et impiam, p. 1206. See p. 1146. Philostorgius, who saw those objects through a different medium, is inclined to forget the difference of the important diphthong. See in particular viii. 17, and Godefroy, p. 352.]

The provinces of Egypt and Asia, which cultivated the language and manners of the Greeks, had deeply imbibed the venom of the Arian controversy. The familiar study of the Platonic system, a vain and argumentative disposition, a copious and flexible idiom, supplied the clergy and people of the East with an inexhaustible flow of words and distinctions; and, in the midst of their fierce contentions, they easily

forgot the doubt which is recommended by philosophy, and the submission which is enjoined by religion. The inhabitants of the West were of a less inquisitive spirit; their passions were not so forcibly moved by invisible objects, their minds were less frequently exercised by the habits of dispute; and such was the happy ignorance of the Gallican church, that Hilary himself, above thirty years after the first general council, was still a stranger to the Nicene creed. [72] The Latins had received the rays of divine knowledge through the dark and doubtful medium of a translation. The poverty and stubbornness of their native tongue was not always capable of affording just equivalents for the Greek terms, for the technical words of the Platonic philosophy, [73] which had been consecrated, by the gospel or by the church, to express the mysteries of the Christian faith; and a verbal defect might introduce into the Latin theology a long train of error or perplexity. [74] But as the western provincials had the good fortune of deriving their religion from an orthodox source, they preserved with steadiness the doctrine which they had accepted with docility; and when the Arian pestilence approached their frontiers, they were supplied with the seasonable preservative of the Homousion, by the paternal care of the Roman pontiff. Their sentiments and their temper were displayed in the memorable synod of Rimini, which surpassed in numbers the council of Nice, since it was composed of above four hundred bishops of Italy, Africa, Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Illyricum. From the first debates it appeared, that only fourscore prelates adhered to the party, though they affected to anathematize the name and memory, of Arius. But this inferiority was compensated by the advantages of skill, of experience,

and of discipline; and the minority was conducted by Valens and Ursacius, two bishops of Illyricum, who had spent their lives in the intrigues of courts and councils, and who had been trained under the Eusebian banner in the religious wars of the East. By their arguments and negotiations, they embarrassed, they confounded, they at last deceived, the honest simplicity of the Latin bishops; who suffered the palladium of the faith to be extorted from their hand by fraud and importunity, rather than by open violence. The council of Rimini was not allowed to separate, till the members had imprudently subscribed a captious creed, in which some expressions, susceptible of an heretical sense, were inserted in the room of the Homoousion. It was on this occasion, that, according to Jerom, the world was surprised to find itself Arian. [75] But the bishops of the Latin provinces had no sooner reached their respective dioceses, than they discovered their mistake, and repented of their weakness. The ignominious capitulation was rejected with disdain and abhorrence; and the Homoousian standard, which had been shaken but not overthrown, was more firmly replanted in all the churches of the West. [76]

[Footnote 72: Testor Deumcoeli atque terrae me cum neutrum audissem, semper tamen utrumque sensisse.... Regeneratus pridem et in episcopatu aliquantisper manens fidem Nicenam nunquam nisi exsulaturus audivi. Hilar. de Synodis, c. xci. p. 1205. The Benedictines are persuaded that he governed the diocese of Poitiers several years before his exile.]

[Footnote 73: Seneca (Epist. lviii.) complains that even the of the

Platonists (the ens of the bolder schoolmen) could not be expressed by a Latin noun.]

[Footnote 74: The preference which the fourth council of the Lateran at length gave to a numerical rather than a generical unity (See Petav. tom. ii. l. v. c. 13, p. 424) was favored by the Latin language: seems to excite the idea of substance, trinitas of qualities.]

[Footnote 75: Ingemuit totus orbis, et Arianum se esse miratus est. Hieronym. adv. Lucifer. tom. i. p. 145.]

[Footnote 76: The story of the council of Rimini is very elegantly told by Sulpicius Severus, (Hist. Sacra, l. ii. p. 419-430, edit. Lugd. Bat. 1647,) and by Jerom, in his dialogue against the Luciferians. The design of the latter is to apologize for the conduct of the Latin bishops, who were deceived, and who repented.]