

that my aim before all else should be that among the most blessed congregations of the universal Church a single faith and a pure love and a religion that is unanimous about Almighty God be observed. (2) This however could not achieve [90] an irreversible and secure settlement unless, after all or the great majority of the bishops had gathered in the same place, a decision were taken upon each of the points affecting the most holy religion. For this reason when most had been assembled, and I myself as one of you was also among those present (for I would not wish to deny that in which I most delight, that I am your fellow-servant), all topics were subject to proper discussion until the point was reached where the doctrine pleasing to the all-seeing God of all was brought to light as the basis for unanimous agreement, so that nothing remained to cause further difference of opinion or dispute about faith.

18 (1) *Thereupon, since a controversy had broken out on the subject of the most holy day of Easter, it was unanimously decided that it would be best for everyone everywhere to celebrate it on the same day. For what could be better for us, and more reverent, than that this festival, from which we have acquired our hope of immortality, should be observed invariably in every community on one system and declared principle?*

(2) *In the first place it was decreed unworthy to observe that most sacred festival in accordance with the practice of the Jews; having sullied their own hands with a heinous crime, such bloodstained men are as one might expect mentally blind. It is possible, now that their nation has been rejected, by a truer system which we have kept from the first day of the Passion to the present, to extend the performing of this observance into future periods also. Let there be nothing in common between you and the detestable mob of Jews! (3) We have received from the Saviour another way; a course is open to our most holy religion that is both lawful and proper. Let us with one accord take up this course, right honourable brothers, and so tear ourselves away from that disgusting complicity. For it is surely quite grotesque for them to be able to boast that we would be incapable of keeping these observances without their instruction. (4) What could those people calculate correctly, when after that murder of the Lord, after that parricide, they have taken leave of their senses, and are moved, not [91] by any rational principle, but by uncontrolled impulse, wherever their internal frenzy may lead them? Hence it comes about that in this very matter they do not see the truth, so that nearly always they get it wrong, and instead of the proper calculation they observe the Pascha a second time in the same year. Why then do we follow those who are by common consent sick with fearful error? We would never allow the Pascha*

to be kept a second time in the same year. But even if that argument were absent, your Good Sense ought to make it the continual object of your effort and prayer, that the purity of your soul should not by any resemblance appear to participate in the practices of thoroughly evil persons.

(5) It is furthermore easy to see that in such an important matter, and for such a religious feast, it is wrong that there should be a discrepancy. Our Saviour has passed on the day of our liberation as one, the day, that is, of his holy passion, and it is his purpose that his universal Church be one. However much its parts may be separated in many different places, nevertheless it is cherished by the one Spirit, that is, by the divine will.

(6) But let your Holiness's good sense reflect how dreadful and unseemly it is, that on the same days some should be attending to their fasts while others are holding drinking parties, and that after the days of Pascha some should be busy with feasts and recreations while others are dedicating themselves to the prescribed fasts. That is the reason therefore why divine Providence intends that this matter should achieve the proper settlement and be brought under one regulation, as I presume all are aware.

19 (1) Since therefore it was proper that the matter should be adjusted in such a way that nothing be held in common with that nation of parricides and Lord-killers, [92] and since a decent system exists, which all the churches of the western, southern and northern parts of the world observe, and also some of the churches in the eastern areas, and as a consequence all have at this time judged that it is right (and I have personally given my word that it will please your Good Sense), that what is observed with one harmonious will in the City of Rome, in Italy and all Africa, in Egypt, the Spains, the Gauls, the Britains, the Libyas, the whole of Greece, the administrative region of Asia, Pontus and Cilicia, your Intelligence also will gladly embrace, when you reflect that not only is the number of the churches in the places mentioned greater, but also that it is a supremely holy thing for all to hold in common what seems both to be required by correct computation and to have nothing to do with Jewish perjury; (2) and to put the most important point concisely, by unanimous verdict it was determined that the most holy feast of Easter should be celebrated on one and the same day, since it is both improper that there should be a division about a matter of such great sanctity, and best to follow that option, in which there is no admixture of alien error and sin.

20 (1) In these circumstances, then, accept gladly the heavenly grace and this truly divine command; for all the business transacted in the holy assemblies of bishops has reference to the divine will.

(2) *So once you have explained to our beloved brothers what is written above, you ought now to accept and institute the stated method of computation and the strict observance of the most holy day, so that when I come, as I have long desired, to see the state of your affairs, I may be able to celebrate the holy festival with you on one and the same day, and I may share with you my satisfaction on every count, as I observe [93] that devilish savagery has by the divine power and through our actions been obliterated, while our faith and peace and concord are everywhere flourishing.*

God preserve you, dear brothers.

(3) The Emperor sent out a text to the same effect as this letter to each of the provinces, enabling his readers to see reflected in his thinking the utter purity of his holy devotion to the Divinity.

21-2. *The bishops dismissed*

21 (1) When the Council was finally about to dissolve, he gave a farewell address to the bishops. He summoned them all together on one day, and took it as his theme that they should earnestly cultivate peace with each other. They should avoid contentious quarrels. They should not be envious if any among the bishops had a reputation for the word of wisdom, but regard the benefit of one man's skill as common to all. Those who were more proficient should not despise those of more modest gifts, for it is for God to decide who are on a true reckoning more proficient. To the weaker ones appropriate concessions should be made, since perfection is always a rarity. (2) They should therefore be tolerant with each other when they offend in minor matters, and be generous and forgive human weaknesses, all regarding harmonious concord as precious, so that no ground should be given by their mutual strife for mockery by those who are always ready to speak ill of the divine Law; those persons should be kept seriously in mind in every matter, since they can be saved if what we have seems to them worth while. One thing they should be in no doubt about was that not everybody gets benefit from intellectual ability. (3) There are some who are happy to be provided with a living, others who by habit fawn upon those in authority; some gladly greet those who affably hold out their hand, others feel affection when they are honoured with presents; but few are those with a