

second century of the Christian era it was used in the admission of Catechumens to baptism, and in certifying to the orthodoxy of persons who had been elected to the sacred office of bishops in the Church of God. This form was found sufficient to answer these ends until the beginning of the fourth century, when heresy of a new kind appeared—an individual * had then the boldness to teach that the Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, was not in reality divine, that he was only the first of creatures. To counteract the evil effects of this false teaching a council was convened which met at Nice in the year 325, and put forth an exposition of the faith of Christians, almost in the words of that form which I have just recited to you from the Lord's table, and which goes under the name of the Nicene Creed. In this form the supreme divinity of the Son was clearly expressed, so that no person could be called a Catholic Christian who would deny that Jesus Christ was in the highest sense God; but there was not the same precision manifested with respect to the Divinity of the Holy Ghost. The formula, as put forth by that council, terminated with the words, "And in the Holy Ghost." After a short time another form of heresy presented itself which pretended to acquiesce in the truth of the doctrine of the Nicene Creed, but denied the divinity and personality of the Holy Ghost; another council was thereupon called to settle this point, which met at Constantinople in the year 381, and enlarged the creed into its present form, with the exception of a single word, † which was afterwards added to it, and which contains a perfectly true and scriptural doctrine. This creed thus put forth in its shorter form by the first General Council at Nice, and published in its more complete and perfect form by the second General Council at Constantinople, is the Catholic Creed, and that church which holds to it alone without addition or diminution, is the Catholic Church; and the Church which has added to its articles doctrines that were not known when it was composed is not catholic.

After the lapse of another half century, the circumstances of the church required that another General Council should be convened, which met at Ephesus, in the year 431, and after considering the formula of the Church's faith, issued the following decree: "The holy synod decreed that it should be lawful for no one to profess, to write, or to compose any other form of faith than that defined by the holy fathers who with the Holy Ghost had been assembled at Nice. But they who shall have dared to compose or to profess, or to offer any other form of faith to those wishing to be converted to the acknowledgment of the truth, whether from Paganism or from Judaism, or from any sort of heresy; if they were bishops or clergymen, the bishops should be deposed from their episcopacy, and the clergy from their clerical office, but that if they were laymen they should be subjected to an anathema." ‡

* Arius, Circ., A. D. 315. The doctrine of the mere humanity of the Saviour had been previously broached by Theodotus, the tanner, about the year A. D. 200. This individual was excommunicated for his heresy by Victor, Bishop of Rome, and the notion remained dormant until it was resuscitated by Arius, as mentioned above.

† Filioque, and from the Son.

‡ Canon 7.