

1700 YEARS SINCE THE FORMULATION OF THE NICEAN CREED (325-2025)

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ABSTRACT

The formulation of the Symbol of Faith took place during the first two Ecumenical Synods, of Nicaea (in 325) and of Constantinople (in 381), which have given it the name of Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol of Faith (Creed), in answer to two of the great heresies of the 4th century, the Arian heresy and the heresy of the Pneumatomachi (Macedonians), both considered anti-Trinitarian heresies and both being marked by fierce theological confrontations and disputes concerning the dogma of the Holy Trinity. In this context, considering how serious the believers' confusion had become, the Church had to officially present its Orthodox perspective. This resulted in the formulation of the “Symbol of Faith” confessed by the whole Christian Church for over 17 centuries. The formula established back then represents an exemplary sacred unity between Scripture, Tradition and Church, an admirable dogmatic synthesis of the Christian conscience.

Keywords: Council; Nicaea; Credo; confession of faith; Symbol of Faith; dogma;

INTRODUCTION

This year we celebrate 1700 years since the First Ecumenical Synod of Nicaea (325-2025), where the first articles of the Orthodox Creed were established.

The Orthodox Creed is the most concise and precise existing expression of the fundamental doctrine of our Orthodox faith, an admirable dogmatic synthesis of the Christian conscience¹. As a dogmatic feat of the first two Ecumenical Councils, Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople in 381, which have given it the name of Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol of Faith, or, simply, The Creed (Σύμβολον), it is the most significant Orthodox confession of faith, the first “Ecumenical symbol”² of the Church.

It is this Creed that we utter during each celebration of the Holy Liturgy, during Baptism and which we read together with our personal prayers.

It is not the first formulation or norm of our faith, but is the most elaborate and complex confession of the Orthodox faith, it replaced those that preceded it and remained normative for 17 centuries to this day³.

¹ Constantin GALERIU, „Sinodul II ecumenic și învățătura despre Sfântul Duh” (“The Second Ecumenical Council and the teaching on the Holy Spirit”), in *Ortodoxia*, XXXIII, 3 (1981), p. 386.

² André DE HALLEUX, “La réception du symbole oecuménique, de Nicée à Chalcédoine”, in vol. *Patrologie et oecumenisme. Recueil d'études*, Leuven University Press/Uitgeverij Peeters, Leuven, 1990, p. 30.

³ Norman TANNER (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. 1, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, *passim*.

Confessions of faith emerged even since the first Christian century, in answer to the liturgical, didactic and apologetic needs of the Church.

Liturgically, the Creed represented an expression of the faith – an obligatory preparatory moment for receiving the Baptism, the Holy Communion etc. Then, it was necessary for the preparation of the catechumens, having a didactic role, and it also constituted a jointing rule of the true faith, against the heresies, having an apologetic role⁴.

1. PRE-NICAEAN CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

The oldest confession of faith is the Apostolic Symbol, considered to have been composed by the Holy Apostles themselves. It briefly includes the confession of faith in the Holy Trinity, reminding a few characteristic features for each Person; reminding of the faith in the Church, in the communion of the Saints, in the forgiveness of sins, in the resurrection of the dead and in the eternal life. It constitutes the model for the subsequent confessions, which emerged in most of the important Christian centres.

Around the year 200, Saint Irenaeus of Lugdunum (also known as St. Irenaeus of Lyons) presents a Creed, which had been used for a long time in the Church and which is very similar to the Apostolic one. Tertullian (220) and Marcellus (beginning of the 4th century) render a similar Creed. Similarly, Rufinus of Aquileia (390) and Blessed Augustine (400). We know the confessions of faith of Jerusalem, Neocaesarea of Pontus, Caesarea of Palestine, Nicea etc. In Alexandria, the Athanasian Creed was used (attributed to Saint Athanasius the Great since the 4th century)⁵.

2. ARIUS' HERESY AND THE COMBAT AGAINST IT AT THE FIRST ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

The emergence of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is related to the doctrinal disorder caused by the heretic Arius, priest in Alexandria.

Arius⁶ was an indirect disciple of Paul of Samosata, anti-Trinitarian heretic, who stated that God is only one person. He refused to admit the divinity of Jesus, considering Him a simple man inhabited by the Logos – Whom he mistook for the Holy Spirit – as in a temple. Arius got in touch with the ideas of the heretic Paul, at the school of priest Lucian of Antioch, him, too, a follower of his anti-Trinitarian heresy.

Arius continues Paul of Samosata's ideas, denying the Trinity and the divinity of the Son, about Who he says that He is the first creature of the Father, made by God in time, so as to create the world through Him. Contaminated by Gnostic ideas according to which matter is bad, he considers that God cannot get in touch with it and this is why He creates for Himself a mediator, the Son. Arius believes that Jesus is just an adoptive Son of the Father.

⁴ Nicolae PAICU, „Crezul ca simbol și mărturie a dreptei credințe în istoria Bisericii creștine” (“The Creed, symbol of faith and testimony of the rightly-glorifying/orthodox faith in the Christian Church history”), in *Candela*, 1-2 (2010), p. 42.

⁵ Hristu ANDRUȚOS, *Simbolica*, translated by Prof. Justin Moisescu, Editura Centrului Mitropolitan al Olteniei, Craiova, 1955, pp. 23, 25, 32.

⁶ Cl. CHOPIN P. S. S., *La Verbe incarné et Rédempteur*, in col. “Le Mystère chrétien”, Desclée-Tournai, ²1963, p. 51; Νίκου Α. ΜΑΤΣΟΥΚΑ, *Ὄρθοδοξία καὶ αἵρεση*, Θεσσαλονίκη, 1992, p. 280; Anton I. ADĂMUȚ, *Literatură și filosofie creștină* (Christian literature and philosophy), vol. I, Iași, 1997, pp. 41-42; J. TIXERONT, *Histoire des Dogmes dans l'antiquité chrétienne*, tom. II, Paris, ⁸1924, p. 27.

Arius begins to propagate his heresy in the year 318. He is condemned by a Council, in Alexandria, in 320 or 321, but his ideas continue to spread⁷.

The Emperor Constantine the Great convokes the First Ecumenical Council, in Nicea, in 325. The Bishops participating to it⁸ establish the faith in the divinity of the Son and His consubstantiality with the Father (ὁμοούσιος τῷ πατρὶ), in a confession of faith.

Back then, in Nicea, only three people refused to sign the Creed, out of the 318 Fathers. They were Arius and two more Bishops, one of them even the Bishop of Nicea, even the local Bishop. Why did they actually refuse to sign? Because they had introduced in the Creed a word that was not from the Scripture, the word ὁμοούσιος, consubstantial. During the first stage, the fathers said that this word was not from the Holy Scripture and, not being there, we could not use it. Yet, the Fathers from the Council, whichever words they chose from the Holy Scripture, they were not able to leave only those words because they could have been interpreted in an Arian sense as well, and so the only concept that was able to save the day was this concept from the Greek philosophy.

A great theologian, who converted to the Orthodoxy on his deathbed, Jaroslav Pelikan⁹, remarked in a fundamental work, *The History of the Christian Tradition*, the following: “the Hellenization of the language by a theological term led to the de-Hellenization of the faith”, namely it became possible to formulate this great mystery, because here lies the dilemma: God is not just Unique and solitary or alone, as the neo-Platonism and the whole Greek philosophy postulated, but is One and Three at the same time. It is only this philosophic formulation that has been able to save theology from a wrong understanding of God.

The formulation *consubstantial*¹⁰ – ὁμοούσιος¹¹ (Gr. ὁμο = same, οὐσία = substance; Lat. consubstantialiter = of one being, consubstantial) is a non-Biblical theological term, adopted by the Council of Nicea (325) to define the identity of being – the divinity and the coexistence or consubstantiality between the embodied Logos and the Father. This term

⁷ I. RAMUREANU, „Sinodul I Ecumenic de la Niceea, de la 325. Condamnarea ereziei lui Arie. Simbolul Niceean” (“The First Ecumenical Synod of Nicea. The condemnation of Arius’ heresy. The Nicean Symbol”), in *Studii Teologice* (Theological Studies), XXIX, 1-2 (1977), pp. 15-30.

⁸ In the Orthodox calendar, the Fathers of Nicea are celebrated on the first Sunday after the Ascension of the Lord.

⁹ See also J. PELIKAN, *Jesus through the centuries. His place in the history of culture*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1987, p. 2.

¹⁰ Philip SCHAFF, Henry WACE (eds.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Cristian Church*, Vol. 14, Albany, Oregon, 1996, p. 57 sqq.

¹¹ Regarding, in general, the origin and the significance of the term “ὁμοούσιος”, see: J. F. BETHUNE-BAKER, *The meaning of Homoousios in the Constantinopolitan Creed*, Cambridge, 1901; P. GALTIER, “L’ ὁμοούσιος de Paul de Samosate”, in *Recherches de science religieuse*, 12 (1922), pp. 30-45; C. HAURET, *Comment le défenseur de Nicée a-t-il compris le dogme de Nicée?*, Bruges, 1936; J. Ortiz DE URBINA, “L’ homoousios preniceno”, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 8 (1942), pp. 194-209; G. L. PRESTIGE, *God in Patristic Thought*, London, 1952, pp. 197-218; J. LEBON, “Le sort du consubstantiel Nicéen”, in *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique*, 47 (1952), pp. 485-539; 48 (1953), pp. 632-682; H. KRAFT, “Ὁμοούσιος”, in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 66 (1954-1955), pp. 1-23; A. TULLER, “Le sens du term ὁμοούσιος dans le vocabulaire théologique d’ Arius et de l’ Ecole d’ Antioche”, in *Studia Patristica*, 3, ed. by F. L. Cross, Berlin, 1961, pp. 421-422; G. C. STEAD, *The Early Christian Creeds*, London, 1976, pp. 242-254; M. FOUYAS, “The Homoousion”, in *Abba Salama*, X (1979), pp. 5-17; Georges FLOROVSKY, “The Cristological Dogma and Terminology”, in *Papers and Discussions between Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Theologians – The Bristol Consultation*, July 25-29, 1967, Holy Cross School of Theological Hellenic College, Brookline, Massachusetts, in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, XIII, 2 (1968), pp. 190-193; A. GRILLMEIER, “Homoousios”, *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche*, Freiburg, Zweite Auflage, 1967, pp. 467-468.

had already been used by Paul of Samosata¹², yet, in the year 268, the local Council of Antioch did not accept it. It affirmed that the Logos is not different hypostatically from the Father, but is of one being with the Father, understanding that the being is the same as the hypostasis or the person¹³. The merit of imposing, in an Orthodox sense, the term *ὁμοούσιος* goes to Saint Athanasius of Alexandria¹⁴. Received and introduced after the brilliant theological-philosophical explanations of this great Holy Father, the word *consubstantial* became famous in the subsequent controversies and in the fights of the Orthodox against the Arians to keep the Christian faith unblemished¹⁵.

Arius' heresy is not exclusively Trinitarian but also Christological. "The mindless and ungodly Arius"¹⁶ denied the divinity, the equality and the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, teaching that Jesus Christ is the son of God, yet neither born from eternity from the Father, nor consubstantial with Him, but created. The principles of this rational (gnostico-philosophical) conception are the following:

1. Arius believes that the only uncreated and unborn principle (ἀέξ□□□□□) is God-the Father; in his view, the Father is fully independent, while the Son is dependent on the being of the Father¹⁷.

2. Arius thinks that the Son is not created from the being of the Father, but from His will, out of nothing, being His first creature. Arius, influenced by Philo of Alexandria¹⁸ (c. 20 BCE – c. 50 CE) – supporter of the conception about the Demiurg-Logos –, affirms that God being absolutely transcendent cannot enter in a direct relation with the world, which is why He creates an intermediate being between Him and the world, as instrument of creation¹⁹. Accordingly, the Son has the existence from before time, yet not from eternity, because there would have been a time when He, the Son, did not exist²⁰.

This Arian conception is in total contradiction with the Christian teaching confessing that God Himself created *ex nihilo* the substance of the world and from this substance He created the world. The world is the work of God's love and is meant for deification. As external activity of God, the creation of the world and of man, in general, is the work of God-the Father, especially, by *appropriation*, but to which the other Persons participate as well: the Son and the Holy Spirit (Genesis 1: 1-2; John 1: 3; Rom. 11: 36).

¹² P. GALTIER, "L'ὁμοούσιος de Paul de Samosate", in *Recherches de science religieuse*, 12 (1922), pp. 30-45

¹³ Ioan RĂMUREANU, Milan ȘESAN, Teodor BODOGAE, *Istoria bisericească universală*, vol. I, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române (EIBMBOR), București, 1987, p. 204.

¹⁴ Saint Athanasios the Great said that those who do not accept *ὁμοούσιος* but *ὁμοιουσιος* (similar), differ from the Orthodoxy (*De Synodis*, 41, P.G., XXVI, col. 764).

¹⁵ We find an exhaustive analysis of this term in Constantin VOICU, „Problema ὁμοούσιος la Sfântul Atanasie cel Mare” (The issue of ὁμοούσιος with Saint Athanasius the Great), in *Mitropolia Olteniei*, XV, 1-2 (1963), pp. 3-20.

¹⁶ Sticheron 1, Ode III, „Canon of the Holy Fathers”, Matins, „Sunday of the Fathers of the First Council”, in *The Pentecostarion of The Orthodox Church*, translated from the Church Slavonic by reader Isaac E. Lambertsen, 2010, The St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, Tennessee, p. 254.

¹⁷ Constantin VOICU, „Problema ὁμοούσιος la Sfântul Atanasie cel Mare” (The issue of ὁμοούσιος with Saint Athanasius the Great), in *Mitropolia Olteniei*, XV, 1-2 (1963), pp. 3-4, note 4.

¹⁸ Philo Judaeus, *Legum Allegoriarum Libri* 2.21: “But the most universal of all things is God; and in the second place the word of God. But other things have an existence only in word, but in deed they are at times equivalent to that which has no existence.” (*The works of Philo Judaeus, the contemporary of Josephus*, Vol. 1. Yonge, C. D., translated by Henry G. Bohn, London, 1854, p. 102).

¹⁹ This is a Gnostic and Manichean idea, according to which matter is bad in itself, and the supreme God could not get in touch with matter directly, because it would get Him dirty. According to the Gnostics, matter (ύλη) is from eternity in absolute opposition with the divine spirit.

²⁰ Ioan RĂMUREANU, Milan ȘESAN, Teodor BODOGAE, *Istoria bisericească universală*, vol. I, p. 317.

3. Finally, Arius also claims that the Son can also be called God, because, due to the divine grace He received from the Father, He became an *adoptive Son of the Father*. However, He is no true God, as, according to His nature and features, the Son is so alien and completely dissimilar to the Father. The substance of the Father and that of the Son are so different, just as different as the infinite differs from the finite²¹.

The correct teaching of faith about the second person of the Holy Trinity is the following: God-the Son has as personal feature His birth (γεννησις) from eternity from the Father, yet this birth is like a “Light without beginning, shining from the light of the Father”, as He “by nature being God, also with His nature He made Himself a man for us...”, and He is “the only-begotten Son, born from the Father before all ages” (John 1: 14). He received His being from the Father by birth: “From womb I have begotten You, before the morning star” (Ps. 109/110, 3). Yet, He does not receive just a part of the being of the Father, as it happens in the case of men, but receives it in full, without the Father losing anything from His being by this communication. And this communication takes place from eternity. Therefore, from eternity, the Father has His Son, as Saint John of Damascus will say, later on, because there was no time when the Father would have been without the Son, “because God could not be called Father without the Son, and if He were without Son, He would not be a Father”, just as there is no time interval when the fire were without light²².

Arianism was condemned at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea, which established not just the divinity of the preexisting Son, but but also the identity of Jesus Christ with the Son born from eternity. It is also there and then that the Creed established the teaching about the divinity of the Son, His equality and His consubstantiality with the Father. The same Son consubstantial with the Father made Himself man for our salvation. There, at the Nicean Council was prepared the 5th century Synod teaching on the unity of Christ.

Therefore, we distinguish during the first centuries a very determined teaching regarding the divinity of Christ, regarding His humanity and His mysterious unity. Actually, the terminology of the Holy Fathers of this period sometimes lacks precision. In the 4th and 5th centuries, heresies will be the opportunity of a precise formulation of a primordial importance²³.

The Nicean Synod of 325 enjoyed a special authority. The confession of faith of the Church, the first Symbol of the Church²⁴, constituted for the Fathers the first criterion of the true Orthodoxy (rightly-glorifying/orthodox faith) being even lifted by Ephesus to the rank of “unique” necessary and sufficient norm. The Nicean Creed represents the “official” birth certificate of the dogmatic language of the Church. For the first time in a normative text of the Church, new words were used, which words are not found in the Scriptures, to explain the Christian faith. It was not about a betrayal, although this is how it was seen by many at that time, but about a remarkable Synod wisdom able to use new terms or expressions to faithfully preserve and transmit the old meaning of the Christian message, when the latter was in danger of being misinterpreted.

²¹ Atanasie NEOIȚĂ, „Hristologia Sfântului Atanasie cel Mare” (The Christology of Saint Athanasius the Great), in *Biserica Ortodoxă*, II, 2 (2000), p. 69.

²² SFÂNTUL IOAN DAMASCHIN, *Dogmatica*, I, 8, translated in Romanian by D. Fecioru, București, 1943, pp. 39, 43.

²³ Cl. CHOPIN, *Le Verbe incarné et Rédempteur*, p. 51.

²⁴ André DE HALLEUX, “La réception du symbole oecuménique, de Nicée à Chalcédoine”, in vol. *Patrologie et oecumenisme. Recueil d'études*, Leuven University Press/Uitgeverij Peeters, Leuven, 1990, p. 30.

To combat this heresy, the Orthodox Church spread in the majority of her divine services hymns showing the truth of faith regarding the divinity of the Son and His consubstantiality with the Father. Moreover, she even ordained a special Sunday dedicated to the 318 Holy Fathers who participated in the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea. This Sunday is called “The Sunday of the Holy Fathers” and is celebrated on the 7th Sunday after Easter. Among the important Saints who took part in the First Ecumenical Council we shall remind of Saint Athanasius (deacon), Saint Spyridon, Saint Nicholas and others.

Worth signalling is the fact that a Bishop of Tomis also took part in the First Ecumenical Council. This fact is confirmed by the church historian Eusebius of Caesarea, participant in this Council, who affirmed that: “the Scyth [the hierarch of the Scythia Minor province] was not missing from the assembly, either”²⁵. The name of this Bishop is, nevertheless, not known. [We believe that his name was Mark?]

Arius and his followers are anathematized and exiled in the Western Iliria, yet the dissemination of the heresy continues, reaching even the imperial family. Only Arius sudden and shameful death (his intestines burst open in a toilet), in 336, makes the power of Arianism decrease²⁶.

Between 325 and 381, there is a terrible period in the history of Christianity, given the influence of Arianism on many Roman emperors who persecuted the Orthodox.

During the over 50 years that followed the First Ecumenical Council, it was believed that Arianism would prevail. However, in 381 we have another ecumenical Council, as a new emperor, providential for the Christians, like Constantine the Great, comes to the throne. After his reign, a series of Arian or semi-Arian emperors followed, and even Julian the Apostate who intended to fully destroy Christianity; he was not successful as fortunately his reign did not last long.

Here comes along a new Orthodox emperor, Theodosius I the Great. We speak too little about him, yet this personality needs to be highlighted because we owe to him the fact that he introduced Christianity as state religion and imposed it in front of paganism. He led to the triumph of Christianity in the Roman Empire. This emperor had a very great liking for Saint Gregory of Nazianzus and especially for the theology of the Cappadocian Fathers, who were the main defenders of the Orthodoxy, led by Saint Basil the Great.

Towards the end of the Arian dispute, heresies emerged concerning Christ's relation with humanity. Bishop of Laodicea, since 360, Apollinarius began by energetically defending the Trinitarian doctrine of Nicea, wanting to save, by the following reasoning, the ransom doctrine and Jesus Christ's perfect unity: two complete realities cannot constitute just one existence; Christ not constituting but one existence and His divinity being none other but complete, it would result that He is incomplete in His humanity. For Apollinarius this humanity is with no spiritual soul (νοῦς), the Logos taking its place. It would result that in Jesus Christ there is but one nature. Wherefrom the famous formula: “One and only one embodied nature of God-the Logos”²⁷.

²⁵ EUSEBIU DE CEZAREEA (Eusebius of Caesarea), *Viața lui Constantin și alte scrieri* (Constantine's Life and other writings), in col. “Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești” (PSB) (Church Fathers and Writers), serie nouă (new series), volume 8, translation by Radu Alexandrescu, Basilica, București, 2012.

²⁶ I. RĂMUREANU, „Lupta Ortodoxiei contra arianismului, de la Sinodul I ecumenic până la moartea lui Arie” (The fight of the Orthodoxy against Arianism from the First Ecumenical Council until Arius' death), in *Studii Teologice* (Theological Studies), XIII, 1-2 (1961), pp. 29-30.

²⁷ Μία φύσις τοῦ Θεοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένη; Cf. APOLLINARIUS, *Ad Jovianum*, I, in éd. H. Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodicea und seine Schule*, Tübingen, 1904, p. 250-251; Apollinarius' text is quoted *in extenso* and attributed to Saint Athanasius in St. Cyril in the work: *De recta fide ad reginas*, P.G., LXXXVI, col. 1212-

Therefore, Apollinarius falls in the other extreme: contesting the full human nature in Jesus Christ. Using Plato's trichotomism, according to which man is made up of body (σώμα or σάρξ), animal soul (ψυχή αλόγος) and mind (ψυχή λογική or νοῦς), the heretic Apollinarius affirmed that the Son of God assumed²⁸ just the body and the animal soul, the spirit being replaced by the Logos²⁹.

It is a big dogmatic error, because in this way Apollinarius was denying the integrity or the fullness of the Saviour's human nature received at the embodiment and was putting in doubt His entire redeeming work, as, according to this conception, Christ could not save, renew and deify but what He had taken on: "What (the Logos) did not take, could not be healed, yet what was united with God was saved"³⁰. And this, due to the fact that the νοῦς represents, in the Fathers' thinking, the quintessence of God's image in man, the mysterious depth in man where our meeting with God takes place in our self or where God Himself settles Himself.

Only by taking on the full human nature, namely having a true or real body and having a soul endowed with mind or reason, which is the leading and noblest part of man, was Jesus Christ, the Son of God, able to bring to salvation, out of philanthropy, the whole human nation³¹. Apollinarius, being very well trained in Hellenistic philosophy, did not manage to go beyond it to get close to the Cappadocian personalism, but situated himself within the frames of the substantialism of the Greek philosophy³².

Apollinarius, condemned at the Second Ecumenical Synod (Constantinople, 381), becomes in this way the first actually Christological heresy in the history of the Church and so the Christological issue emerges in the 4th century. It has in view the relation between the divine nature and the human nature in the person of Christ. From here are born the Christological heresies: Nestorianism, Monophysitism and Monothelitism.

1213; Prof. Nicolae CHIȚESCU, „Formula «O singură fire întrupată a lui Dumnezeu Logosul»” (One and only one embodied nature of God the Logos), in *Ortodoxia*, XVII, 3 (1965), pp. 295-307; Arhim. Dr. Timotei SEVICIU, „Doctrina hristologică a Sfântului Chiril al Alexandriei în lumina tendințelor de apropiere dintre Biserica Ortodoxă și Bisericele Vechi Orientale” (The Christological doctrine of St. Cyril of Alexandria in the light of the tendencies of rapprochement between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Old-Rite Churches) (doctoral thesis), in *Mitropolia Banatului*, XXII, 7-9 (1972), pp. 325-462; Timotei T. SEVICIU, *Doctrina hristologică a Sfântului Chiril al Alexandriei în lumina tendințelor actuale de apropiere dintre Biserica Ortodoxă și vechile Biserici Orientale*, teză de doctorat (doctoral thesis), Editura Mitropolia Banatului, Timișoara, 1973, passim; Timotei T. SEVICIU, „Valoarea hristologiei Sfântului Chiril al Alexandriei în contextul teologiei actuale” (The value of St. Cyril of Alexandria's Christology in the context of today's theology), in *Mitropolia Olteniei*, XXV, 5-6 (1973), pp. 477-482.

²⁸ The term *assume* (*take on*) in Christology means the act by which the Logos takes, appropriates (Lat. *adsumere*) a human nature.

²⁹ Vasile RĂDUCĂ, *Antropologia Sfântului Grigore de Nyssa* (The Anthropology of Saint Gregory of Nyssa), EIBMBOR, București, 1996, p. 244.

³⁰ SFÂNTUL GRIGORIE DE NAZIANZ (ST. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS), *Epistola 101 ad Cledonium* (Letter 101 ad Cledonium), P.G., XXXVII, 181.

³¹ Saint Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis (Cyprus), fighting Apollinarius' heresy, in the year 337, said firmly to his believers: "The Logos or the Word became flesh, namely He made Himself fully man, receiving soul, body, reason and everything that makes up the man, except sin" (*Πανάριον sau Contra tuturor ereziilor*, 120, P.G., XLIII, 233 C).

³² Vasile RĂDUCĂ, *Antropologia Sfântului Grigore de Nyssa* (The Anthropology of St. Gregory of Nyssa), p. 244.

3. COMPLETION OF THE SYMBOL OF FAITH AT THE SECOND ECUMENICAL SYNOD

Another heretic who troubled the peace of the Church was the Bishop of Constantinople, Macedonius, Semi-Arian, promotor of the heresy of the Pneumatomachi. It is a follow-up of Arianism, consisting in the denial of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, Whom they consider the noblest creature of God, superior to the angels. Macedonius is deposed by the Synod of Constantinople, in 360³³.

These and other reminiscences from Arianism made it necessary to organize the Second Ecumenical Synod of Constantinople. A few years prior to the Synod, Saint Basil the Great presented, in the treaty *On the Holy Spirit*, the factions emerged from Arianism after the First Ecumenical Synod: Semi-Arians, Eunomians, Anomoeans, Eudoxians, Pneumatomachi³⁴.

The Second Ecumenical Synod was summoned by the Emperor Theodosius the Great for the spring of the year 381 (May-July), under the Presidency of Bishop Meletius of Antioch, then, after his death, continued under the Presidency of Saint Gregory the Theologian, Bishop of Constantinople, followed by the Patriarch Nectarios of Constantinople. 150 Bishops participated, from all the corners of the Eastern Roman Empire. Except a few Macedonian Bishops and Bishop Ascholius of Thessalonica, who had the right to represent Pope Damasus of Rome, under whose jurisdiction he was, at the Synod³⁵, the Church from the West did not send representatives, as it was preparing a general Synod in Aquileia, for September 381. The ecumenicity of the Second Synod was acknowledged by the Western Bishops and confirmed by the Fourth Ecumenical Synod (451).

One of the participants in this Synod was the Bishop of Tomis, Terentius (Gerontius), the direct follower of Saint Bretanion, who confronted the Roman (Arian) Emperor Valens (369), as the church historian Sozomen testifies.

At the Synod also came 36 Pneumatomachi Bishops, led by Eleusius of Cyzicus and Marcian of Lampsacus. The Synod had as a purpose to solve the Christological controversies triggered by Arianism, to combat the Pneumatomachic heresy of Macedonius, to formulate the Orthodox teaching about the Holy Spirit, to solve some canonical problems of ecclesial discipline, authority and jurisdiction.

At the Synod, a remarkable contribution came from St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Sf. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Epiphanius of Cyprus³⁶.

The Second Synod, in Canon 1, anathematized all the Arian factions, starting with the Anomoeans, Sabellians, Marcellians, Photinians, Apollinarians, Pneumatomachi. The dogmatic statement affirms the consubstantiality and uniqueness of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, against the Pneumatomachi, but also the perfect embodiment of the Son (the

³³ Dumitru RADU, „Hotărârile dogmatice ale Sinodului II ecumenic (381) – sinteză a învățăturii de credință în spiritualitatea ortodoxă” (The dogmatic decisions of the Second Ecumenical Synod (381) – synthesis of the teaching of faith in the Orthodox spirituality), in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* (The Romanian Orthodox Church), XCIX, 7-8 (1981), p. 800.

³⁴ SFÂNTUL VASILE CEL MARE (Saint Basil the Great), *Despre Sfântul Duh. Corespondență (Epistole)* (On the Holy Spirit. Letters), in col., “P.S.B.”, vol. XII, translated by Fr. Constantin Cornițescu, and Fr. Teodor Bodogae, EIBMBOR, București, 1988.

³⁵ Gheorghe I. DRĂGULIN, „Sinodul II ecumenic și unele personalități ale lui în cinstirea milenară a Ortodoxiei românești” (The Second Ecumenical Synod and some of its personalities in the millenary reverence of the Romanian Orthodoxy), in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, XCIX, 7-8 (1981), pp. 868-869.

³⁶ Dumitru RADU, „Hotărârile dogmatice ale Sinodului II ecumenic...” (The dogmatic decisions of the Second Ecumenical Synod), pp. 793-798.

fact that the Son was fully man), against the heresy of Apollinarius of Laodicea. The doctrinal tomos was lost, its content in brief being kept in the Letter of the Constantinopolitan Synod of 382.

The Holy Fathers completed the Nicean Council with the teaching about the Holy Spirit, about the Church, about baptism, about the resurrection of the dead and about the eternal life, bringing some mentions and clarifications to the articles of Nicea. At the completion of the Symbol, the most important role went to St. Gregory of Nyssa. As the Synodal documents have been lost, the Symbol remained presented only in the documents of the Fourth Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon (451), the Fathers making mention that both in the East and in the West it had been used for at least a generation at the baptism, they themselves having been baptized confessing it. Therefore, in the composition of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, the Holy Fathers had as a starting point the previous confessions of faith. One can note a great similarity with the Apostolic Creed.

At Nicea, in the formulation of the teaching about the Son, was used the confession of baptism of the Church of Caesarea, Palestine, presented in the Synod by the Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea³⁷, with some additions made by himself. He read only a part of this confession, the one regarding the Son: "We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, true light of true light, true life of true life, the Only-Begotten Son, the First born of the entire creation". The Synod eliminated some additions made by Eusebius: the name of Word of God, which could be given a subordinationist sense, was replaced by the expression Son of God; for the same reason, the Fathers left aside also the formulations: the First born of all creation and true life of true life, bringing clarifications about the Divinity of the Son and the consubstantiality with the Father, attacked by Arius³⁸.

The Synod did not have as its aim a completion of the Creed as testimony at baptism. It is for this reason that it developed the teaching about the Son, attacked back then, concluding with the affirmation of the faith also in the Holy Spirit, without developing it³⁹. Not being an actual symbol, but rather a definition of Trinitarian faith, this was not used in the cult, many Churches keeping their own confessions of faith, which they completed with sentences from the confession of the First Synod and with other dogmatic formulations, in answer to the heresies emerged after the Synod⁴⁰. Consequently, a lot of confessions of faith continued to exist. Many Semi-Arians accepted the Nicean Creed, but, due to its lack of clarifications on the Holy Spirit, contested the divinity of the Holy Spirit, a state of fact mirrored in their confessions of faith. The confessions of faith were used by them to disseminate their heresies. All these led to a feeling that it was necessary to complete the Creed of Nicea and transform it into a generally-accepted norm faith.

Because the heretics were looking for their arguments in the Nicean Creed, the Fathers of the Second Synod brought some clarifications. Ten more important additions and mentions were brought to the Nicean Creed⁴¹.

³⁷ Philip SCHAFF & Henry WACE (eds.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Cristian Church*, Vol. 14, Albany, Oregon, ²1996, p. 56.

³⁸ Dumitru STĂNILOAE, „Sinodul II ecumenic și Simbolul niceo-constantinopolitan” (The Second Ecumenical Synod and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Synod), in *Ortodoxia*, XXXIII, 3 (1981), pp. 362-364.

³⁹ Dumitru RADU, „Hotărârile dogmatice ale Sinodului II ecumenic...” (The dogmatic decisions of the Second Ecumenical Synod), p. 795.

⁴⁰ Dumitru STĂNILOAE, „Sinodul II ecumenic și Simbolul niceo-constantinopolitan” (The Second Ecumenical Synod and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Synod), pp. 363-365.

⁴¹ Dumitru STĂNILOAE, „Noțiunea dogmei” (The notion of dogma), in *Studii Teologice* (Theological Studies), XVI, 9-10 (1964), p. 552.

We need to mention one thing: *The Creed* at the beginning was not part of the Holy Liturgy, it is introduced in the Holy Liturgy and in the Church services, except for baptism, only starting with the 5th century. By the year 480, we have a first confession, then in 512 and 518, we have this thing assimilated in the manuscripts preserved in the Constantinopolitan tradition.

Even though in itself *The Creed* is not a hymn but a dogmatic text uttered in the framework of the Holy Liturgy, in the Orthodox faith, however, the Church hymns often refer to the truths of faith expressed in it. The hymnography of the evening and morning divine services contain numerous references to the dogmas formulated in the Creed: the divinity or godness of the Son, the procession of the Holy Spirit, the faith in the Church that is “one, holy, ecumenical and apostolical”, the waiting for the resurrection of the dead, etc. The hymns from the royal feasts (the Birth of the Lord, the Baptism of the Lord, the Resurrection of the Lord, the Descent of the Holy Spirit) are actually poetic developments of the articles of faith from the Creed. The Easter hymnography (for instance, the Resurrection Canon composed by Saint John of Damascus) very clearly expresses the articles from the Creed related to Christ's Resurrection and to eternal life.

In the Slavic tradition (Russian, Serbian, etc.) there are polyphonic choral songs on the entire text of *The Creed*, put on music to be sung during the Liturgy, and in the Byzantine tradition and practice (Greek, Romanian, Arabic) it is recited or sung on a simple melody, to underline the solemn and community character of the confession.

CONCLUSIONS

From a baptismal individual testimony, *The Creed* came to be the testimony of the whole Church.

To conclude, the formulation of the Symbol of faith was achieved at the first two Ecumenical Synods, Nicea in the year 325 and Constantinople in the year 381, from where it also takes its name, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol, in answer to two of the great heresies of the 4th century, the Arian heresy and the heresy of the Pneumatomachi, both considered Anti-Trinitarian heresies and both being marked by fierce theological confrontations and disputes regarding the dogma of the Holy Trinity. In this context, seeing how ample the disorders among the believers were, it was necessary for the Church to officially present her Orthodox perspective. Thus, the formulation of “The Symbol of Faith” resulted, confessed by the whole Christian Church for 17 centuries, the formula established back then representing an exemplary sacred unity Scripture-Tradition-Church, an admirable dogmatic synthesis of the Christian conscience.

The Symbol of Faith or *The Creed* adopted by the Fathers of Nicea remains for the dogmatic tradition of the Church the most valuable heritage, the cornerstone of the Christian doctrine⁴².

The Symbol or The Confession of Faith of Nicea of 325 represents the crowning of the efforts of the Fathers taking part in the First Ecumenical Synod to reject the Arian doctrine and to present the revealed teaching on the full divinity of the Logos in a clear, concise, normative and obligatory formula for the entire Church⁴³.

⁴² Sorin ȘALARU (coord.), *Hotărârile dogmatice ale celor șapte Sinoade Ecumenice* (The dogmatic decisions of the Seven Ecumenical Synods), Basilica, București, 2018, p. 21.

⁴³ Sorin ȘALARU (coord.), *Hotărârile dogmatice ale celor șapte Sinoade Ecumenice* (The dogmatic decisions of the Seven Ecumenical Synods), pp. 21-22.

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