

Athanasius

In the extract from *The Pilgrim Church* I have not simplified the words for you. Get out your dictionary and look up the words I have highlighted. The word “Catholic” used in the extract might need an explanation too. Broadbent is using it to mean those who were not followers of Arius. When you have looked up all the words you can write sentences of your own using them.

Dissentients was a new word for me and I'm looking forward to having a chance to use it!

The first general council of the Catholic churches was summoned by Constantine and met at Nicaea in Bithynia (325). The **principal** question before it was that of the **doctrine** taught by Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria, who maintained that the Son of God was a created Being, the first and greatest, but yet, consequently, not on an equality with the Father. Over 300 bishops were present, with their numerous attendants, from all parts of the Empire, to examine this matter, and the Council was opened in great state by Constantine. A number of the bishops present bore in their bodies marks of the tortures which they had endured in the time of persecution. With two **dissentients**, the Council decided that the teaching of Arius was false, that it had not been the teaching of the Church from the beginning, and the Nicene Creed was **framed** to express the truth of the real Divine Nature of the Son and His equality with the Father. Although the decision reached was right, the way of reaching it, by the combined efforts of the Emperor and the bishops, and of enforcing it, by the power of the State, **manifested** the departure of the Catholic church from the Scripture.

Two years after the Council of Nicaea Constantine, altering his view, received Arius back from exile, and in the reign of his son Constantius all the **bishoprics** were filled by Arian bishops; the Government, now become Arian, persecuted the Catholics as formerly it had done the Arians. One of those in high places, moved neither by popular **clamour** nor by the threats or flatteries of the authorities was Athanasius. As a young man he had taken part in the Council of Nicaea and afterwards became Bishop of Alexandria. For nearly fifty years, though repeatedly exiled, he maintained a valiant witness to the true divinity of the Saviour. Slandered, brought up before **tribunals**, taking refuge in the desert, returning to the city, nothing shook his **advocacy** of the truth he believed. Arianism lasted nearly three centuries as the state religion in a number of countries, especially in the later established Northern kingdoms. The Lombards in Italy were the last to abandon it as the national religion.