



COURSE CONTENT DOCUMENT

TITLE: Unpacking the Creeds

Designation: Core Requirement for All Layreaders

Overview

Both the Apostle's and Nicene Creed had their origins as baptismal affirmations. In its present form the Apostle's creed is relatively late but creeds similar to it were apparently in use by the second and third centuries. The Nicene Creed was likewise adapted from a baptismal Creed that was submitted to the Council of Nicea for consideration.

When people became Christians from pagan backgrounds it was important that they were taught the Christian faith. Creeds were a neat summary of that faith and were used as part of the teaching process. This is reflected in our Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer where the Apostle's Creed is recited and then the candidate asked questions about it. Because a creed was taught to new believers it was only natural that they would be asked to assent to or recite it at baptism. Therefore, since very early days a Creed has been a key part of the baptismal liturgy and the dominant Creed used for this in the western Church has been the Apostle's Creed.

The Creeds are not additional truth but merely a summary of Scriptural faith, a sort of early and brief systematic theology. Their value begins and ends with the fact that they are Scriptural as is demonstrated by Article 8 of the Thirty-Nine articles:

The Three Creeds, Nicene Creed, Athanasius's Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture.

The Creeds can provide a useful outline for a preaching series, an introduction to the Christian faith, a home study group or an in depth discipleship group.

Objectives

On completion of this course and as a layreader, you will be able to:

1. describe how each of the three Creeds developed over time
2. identify who wrote each of the Creeds
3. discuss the value of having Creeds in the Anglican Church Communion

Reading Assignment

1. Read John 1: 1-16.
2. Read "The Creed of Saint Athanasius" found on page 695 of the BCP (read a couple of times).
3. Review the "*Church History*" course notes provided by Dr. Hebb.
4. The Differences between the Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed document.

Video Assignment

Print either the slides or slide notes provided to assist with note taking while watching the following videos.

View the 'Unpacking the Creeds' layreader video sessions with Rev'd Terence Chandra (attach link to document).

1. Session 1: The Apostle's Creed (approximately 1 hour)
2. Session 2: The Nicene Creed (approximately 1 hour)
3. Session 3: The Athanasian Creed (approximately 1 hour)

Practical Assignment

1. Complete online multiple choice test for proof of course completion or complete the paper copy and send to the Warden of Layreaders.

Pause and Consider

Where would the Anglican Communion be today without the 3 Creeds?

References and Supplementary Resources

BOOKS

1. A History of Christianity by Owen Chadwick
2. The Story of Christianity by Justo Gonzalez
3. An Introduction to the Christian Faith by Colin Gunton

WEBSITE RESOURCES

1. Apostle's Creed- <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01629a.htm>
2. Nicene Creed- <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11049a.htm>
3. Athanasian Creed- <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02033b.htm>
4. Catholic Encyclopedia called "New Advent." <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/>