

CH 272: TOPICS IN EARLY MEDIEVAL CHURCH HISTORY

Fall Term, 2004: Saving Creeds: Passing on the Faith in the First Seven Centuries of Christianity

Instructor: S. Keefe

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Description

One day a pious Christian woman approached Augustine after he had been preaching to his flock in Hippo. She bore a dead child in her arms. "Baptize him," she said, "so that he will have new life." How, indeed, did Christian men and women in the first seven centuries of the church understand the faith? How was the faith taught and held in the minds of the people? The above incident illustrates the tremendous task the church faced in passing on the true faith. How, must Augustine have groaned, not to kill the spirit of faith in this woman, and yet to guide her in correct belief?

This seminar is an introduction to a vast body of literature of which few students of Church History are aware. It consists of explanations or interpretations of the creed for the people. The texts take us to the heart of the church's mission to teach the faith and to interpret it for its time and its place.

One cannot understand the importance of this literature until one understands the role and importance of creeds during the first seven centuries of the church. For Christians of these centuries, the great majority of whom were illiterate and knew only selected fragments of the Old and New Testaments, the creed, it was held, summarized all of Scripture. It was the sufficient source of salvation. In it was the faith required to be saved; in it was the refutation of every heresy.

It may be a novel experience for most of us to view the faith of the church as an objective reality we acquire at baptism. The faith was a verbal formula that was literally "handed over" to every person and which they (or their sponsors for them) memorized and recited back before they entered the font. The unity of the faithful was felt in a powerful way in this set of words all held in common in their hearts all their lives.

Because of the familiarity of the words of the creed, here was where the Christian education of the people began. Asking them to reflect on each verse of the creed, pastors taught the people how the Scriptures supported each phrase, what each phrase meant for their own lives and what they could hope for. Sermons on the creed were also moral exhortations to the people, connecting what they confessed to believe with how they should act.

Most of the texts we will be reading are expositions on the creed given to new converts to the faith (catechetical instructions) and sermons delivered to the people. They come from Jerusalem, northern Italy, Yugoslavia, central Anatolia (in modern Turkey), north Africa, southern France, and Spain, giving us the chance to compare the interpretation of the faith in different areas of the Roman world.

In order to prepare ourselves to become 5th or 6th century auditors of the texts we read, I will ask several things of you. One is to memorize the Apostles' and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. Until the words of these Creeds are as much a part of our thinking about God as they were for our brothers and sisters of old, we will not understand the impact their explanation had on the ears of the people.

Second, each week I will ask two members of the class to give a background report on the author, time, place, and cultural and political milieu of the text(s) we will be reading that week. Their task will be to help us understand or at least hypothesize as to why the author chose to say what he does. One of the broader questions the readings raise for us today is to what extent the faith has been constantly reinterpreted for changing needs, or to what extent Christians have been constantly called to change to stay faithful to a traditional interpretation. How would you interpret the words of the Apostles' Creed to your parish next Sunday?

Before plunging into our primary source readings in the Course-Pac, we will spend the first two weeks getting an overview of the major creeds in daily use by the people, and their contents. (J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*.) We will also review the major doctrinal issues of the first seven ecumenical councils and the heresies that influenced large portions of the population of given regions. (J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*.) This will be the time for you also to memorize the Apostles' Creed and Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, and choose one phrase from either as the topic for your final research paper.

Requirements

1. Please purchase the following books:

Kelly, J. N. D., Early Christian Creeds, 3rd edition (This is unavailable through Cokesbury. You may be able to get a copy through Amazon or another book dealer. I have put it on reserve in the Divinity School Library.)

Kelly, J. N. D., Early Christian Doctrines (Available at Cokesbury)

Cyril of Jerusalem, Procatecheses, Catecheses 1-12 (The Fathers of the Church Series, vol. 61) (Available at

Cokesbury)

Cyril of Jerusalem, Catecheses 13-18 (The Fathers of the Church Series, vol. 64) (Available at Cokesbury)

Rufinus, A Commentary on the Apostles' Creed (Ancient Christian Writers Series, no. 20) (Available at Cokesbury)

COURSE-PAC A major portion of your reading is contained in a COURSE-PAC, which will be handed out in class. Bring it to class every week. (A list of the contents of the COURSE-PAC is attached to this syllabus.)

BIBLE Bring a Bible to class every week.

2. Weekly reading assignment (see schedule below).

3. Background reports: Each week two people will give a brief background report on the text(s) assigned. The background report should help us to situate the text(s) in the time and place for whom it was written. Find out as much as you can about the author (his education or teachers, his theological leanings, his friends, his enemies), the audience, and the major controversies or needs of the church where and when the text was written. The report should be about 20 minutes. You may wish to give us maps, diagrams, pictures from books, or slides to illustrate your report. You may NOT use "Power Point" technology; you may NOT hand the students information downloaded from the web, or simply read information to them verbatim from the web.

4. Weekly written response to the readings in the form of a sermon to your current congregation. Using an image or idea about one word or phrase in the creed discovered in your readings that you wish your congregation today could hear, build a brief sermon on this image for them. The image or interpretation may have helped you reflect more deeply on theology, ethics, the church, salvation, or certain words of Scripture. (I will collect these written responses from you each week, so please type them.)

5. A final research paper (25-30 pages, typed, with title page, pagination, footnotes, and bibliography) due on the day of your class presentation of the paper (see schedule). Each person will choose one phrase from the Apostles' or Nicene Creed as the topic of their paper and explore any aspect of that phrase in the early church. For example, "God the Father," "born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary," "rose again on the third day," "sits at the right hand of the Father," "will come to judge the living and the dead," "the communion of saints." You may wish to compare what different patristic authors said about it; or you may wish to compare modern interpretations with patristic interpretations; or you may wish to study how it has been illustrated in Christian iconography. We will talk about more possibilities in class.

Please note the attached "Pointers for Writing A Good Research Paper." In your paper you may **NOT QUOTE SECONDARY SOURCES (MODERN AUTHORS) IN THE MAIN BODY OF YOUR PAPER.** You may certainly use secondary sources to gain the necessary background information on your topic, but paraphrase this information, putting it in your own words, but giving the modern author credit for it in a footnote.

Also, you may **NOT USE WEB CITATIONS.** If you use the web to gain information, you must find the source from which it got the information, and give the complete book or article citation (name of author, title, publisher, place, date, pages). You may not give out information or pictures down-loaded from the web to the class. The class can go to the web themselves. The web often gives only superficial information. Also, pictures are poor and fuzzy compared to the originals. Rather, find the originals and bring them to class. Take time to browse in the library. Usually one call number will take you to a whole shelf full of books on your topic. Use art and archaeological journals. I will help you with this.

6. Class presentation of your research paper. On the day of your presentation (see schedule), summarize orally and briefly (do **NOT** give a "power point" outline) the thesis of your paper, and then engage the class in a debate or a discussion of your argument or conclusion. To help the class discuss your paper, **ONE WEEK PRIOR** to your presentation you are to give the class a reading assignment. It might be an article or chapter you found helpful in your research, or a primary-source document, or your paper itself. The entire presentation with discussion should be about 45 minutes.

Your final grade for the course will consist of: class participation, background reports and weekly written response, 40%; selection of your reading assignment for the class and the oral presentation of your paper, 20%; final paper, 40%.

Schedule (The reading assignment is **due** on the date given.)

8/25 Introduction

9/1 Reading: Kelly, ECC, in chapter 1, pp. 6-23; chapter 2 (pp. 30-61); in chapter 4, pp. 100-104, 113-119, 126-130; and chapter 5 (pp. 131-166);
Kelly, ECD, chapter 4, pp. 83-108.
Recite from memory: The Apostles' Creed (the *Textus Receptus* or "T" form, on p. 369 in Kelly, ECC) Memorize this Creed before you begin reading Kelly, so that you are sensitive to its differences from early forms of the Apostles' Creed you will read.

9/8 Reading: Kelly, ECC, in chapter 7, pp. 205-216; in chapter

8, pp. 231-54; in chapter 10, pp. 296-305; in chapter 11, pp. 332-357; and chapter 12, pp. 368-397.

Kelly, ECD, look over pp. 280-343. They are a good summary of Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, and Eutychianism, if you are not familiar with these doctrines.

Recite from Memory: The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed ("C") on pp. 297-8 in Kelly, ECC.

In class we will read and discuss The Tome of Pope Leo I and the Athanasian Creed (especially in reference to Nestorianism and Eutychianism of the 5th century), in your COURSE-PAC.

9/15 Reading: Cyril of Jerusalem, Procatecheses, Catecheses 1-12 (vol. 61 of The Fathers of the Church Series), pp. 1-65, 119-249 (end).

Background report on Cyril:

9/22 Reading: Cyril of Jerusalem, Catecheses 13-18 (vol. 64 of the Fathers of the Church Series), pp. 3-140.

Background report on Jerusalem at the time of Cyril using Egeria's description, written at end of 4th century (see John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, London, 1971), especially her description of Holy Week and when, where, and how the creed was explained to the catechumens:

9/29 Reading: Ambrose, Exposition on the Christian Faith (entire, pp. 199-314; in COURSE-PAC). As you read Ambrose, see how many phrases you can recognize from a creed (Apostles, original Nicene, Nicene-Constantinopolitan, Athanasian) and highlight them.

Background report on Ambrose:

10/6 Reading: Ambrose, "The Sacrament of the Incarnation of our Lord" (pp. 217-218, 231-262) and "Explanatio Symboli ad Initiandos" (pp. 1-39; an English

translation follows the Latin) (in COURSE-PAC).

Augustine, Two sermons: "The Creed" (De symbolo ad catechumenos, pp. 285-307) and "Faith and the Creed" (De fide et symbolo, pp. 311-345) (in COURSE-PAC).

Niceta of Remesiana, two treatises: "An Instruction on Faith" (De ratione fidei, pp. 3-21) and "An Explanation of the Creed" (De symbolo, pp. 43-53) (in COURSE-PAC).

Background reports on Augustine and Niceta:

10/13 FALL BREAK: NO CLASS

10/20 Reading: Rufinus, A Commentary on the Apostles' Creed (entire, and end notes!)

Background report on Rufinus:

10/27 Reading: Theodore of Mopsuestia, Commentary on the Nicene Creed (entire, pp. 1-117) (in COURSE-PAC).

Peter Chrysologus, Sermons 57 and 61, "On the Apostles' Creed to the Catechumens," pp. 3-24, 103-114 (in COURSE-PAC).

Kelly, ECD, pp. 163-188 (different theories of atonement)

Background reports on Theodore and Peter:

11/3 Reading: Caesarius of Arles, Introduction and Sermons 3, 9, and 10 (in COURSE-PAC).

Ildefonsus of Toledo, Liber de cognitione baptismi, cc. 31-96 (pp.69-187) (in COURSE-PAC).

Background reports on Caesarius and Ildefonsus:

11/10 CLASS PRESENTATIONS

11/17 CLASS PRESENTATIONS

11/24 CLASS PRESENTATIONS (Last day of class)

CONTENTS OF COURSE-PAC

1. The Athanasian Creed (prob. 5th-century)
2. The Tome of Pope Leo I, an. 449
3. Ambrose of Milan, Exposition on the Christian Faith (De fide or De Trinitate), an. 379
4. Ambrose of Milan, Sermon: "The Sacrament of the Incarnation of our Lord," ca. an. 381
5. Ambrose of Milan, Address to Catechumens: "Explanation of the Symbol" (date uncertain)
6. Augustine of Hippo, Sermon: "The Creed" (De symbolo ad catechumenos, PL 40:627-36)
7. Augustine of Hippo, Sermon: "Faith and the Creed" (De fide et symbolo, PL 40:181-96), an. 393
8. Niceta of Remesiana, "An Instruction on the Faith" (De ratione fidei), before an. 415
9. Niceta of Remesiana, "An Explanation of the Creed" (De symbolo), before an. 415
10. Theodore of Mopsuestia, Catechetical instruction: "Commentary on the Nicene Creed" (Liber ad baptizandos), before an. 428
11. Peter Chrysologus of Ravenna (ca. 406-450), Sermons 57 and 61: "On the Apostles' Creed to the Catechumens"
12. Caesarius of Arles (ca. 470-543), Sermons 3, 9, 10
13. Ildefonsus of Toledo (d. 676), Chapters 31-96 of his baptismal instruction, De cognitione baptismi

Pointers on Writing a Good Research Paper

When writing a research paper that is based on your use of a primary source (or several primary sources) from the medieval period, you should observe carefully the following guidelines:

1) A title which is not vague, but pinpoints the exact inquiry or study you are making. For example, bad= "Marriage in the Middle Ages"; but good= "The Idea of Marriage According to the 12th c. Heloise in her Correspondence with Abelard."

2) An introduction or a preface, clearly marked as such, which a) states precisely what you are attempting to do in your paper. This may be put in the form of a question, stated as a problem, posed as a controversial hypothesis, or as a challenge to a previous view; b) describes your primary source(s) of information: why you selected this source; is it our only source? who wrote the source? when? why? to whom? is it biased? is it reliable? was it read in the Middle Ages? how great was its influence? what is the historical context (political, social) in which it was written? c) entices, intrigues the reader (this is usually accomplished by posing an interesting question or problem in very straightforward language, giving, at this point, only the bare minimum of background information necessary for the reader to understand the problem.

3) The body of your paper: may I remind you, quoted from the MLA Handbook, p. 1:

The research paper, the final product of research, is not a collection of other persons' opinions but a carefully constructed presentation of an idea- or series of ideas- that relies on other sources for clarification or verification. Learned facts and borrowed opinions must be fully documented in the research paper, usually through endnotes or footnotes, but always in such a manner that they support rather than overshadow the paper itself.

DO NOT DIRECTLY QUOTE SECONDARY SOURCES IN YOUR PAPER! Only primary sources should be directly quoted and only to support your arguments or observations with examples.

Regarding a good writing style, you may find very helpful the list of objectives on the following page. Also, you might wish to refer to a basic writing manual, such as Strunk and White, Elements of Style.

4) Conclusion: this should a) summarize the evidence you have presented and b) draw a conclusion that answers or corresponds to your opening paragraph.

5) Make sure to re-read your paper for typos, spelling, grammatical errors before submitting it. The neat, careful form in which it is presented indicates to me the effort you have put into the paper as a whole.

Assignment: _____

Student: _____

Date: _____

Professor: _____

Rubric for Narrative Evaluation

Grade:

Key to Rubric:

I= Inadequate A= Adequate G = Good E = Excellent

I. Structure

Introduction	I	A	G	E
--Establishes the issue/idea/problem that the paper will address				
--Offers the main position/claim/thesis that will be maintained throughout the paper				
--Introduces major concepts, terms, and keywords to be used in the paper				
--Introduces primary sources to be used in the paper				
--Offers insight into the structure of the paper				
Body	I	A	G	E
--Expresses its purpose clearly and persuasively throughout				
--Is focused, well-organized, and unified				
--Invokes and uses concepts, terms or keywords correctly and persuasively				
--Explores ideas thoroughly with attention to detail				
Conclusion	I	A	G	E
--Restates original premise/idea/position/claim/thesis				
--Offers closure to the paper				
--Establishes the significance of the paper's findings or argument				

II. Content

Paragraphs/Organization	I	A	G	E
--Plan is clear and relates, explicitly, to the assignment.				
--Major points are signaled by strong transitions and paragraphing.				
--Paragraphs are logically ordered with smooth internal and external transitions.				
--The paper does not digress or include irrelevant information or inappropriate material.				
--Adheres to the main objective of the paper as outlined in the introduction				
Argument & Evidence	I	A	G	E
--Paper is controlled by a clear, precise, well-defined objective/thesis/claim/position/argument.				
--Exercises critical thinking				
--Supports assertions with evidence and analysis				
--Includes a balance of paraphrase, summary and direct quote (along with the student's own ideas and language)				
--Sources are well chosen and appropriate.				
--Sources are interpreted critically.				
--Synthesis of evidence and ideas generates a new perspective or prompts an original or creative application of the material.				

Please note: only the items most applicable to this paper are marked.

II. Content, cont.

Mechanics & Style	I	A	G	E
--Avoids errors in sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling				
--Paper uses correct form/style/format, including pagination.				
--Sources are cited correctly and consistently.				
--Communicates clearly and effectively				
--Varied sentence structure; careful attention to each line of writing				
--Prose is lucid/elegant/graceful/beautiful.				

III. Overall Paper

Overall Paper	I	A	G	E
--Paper addresses the issue or question that was assigned.				
--Paper addresses a difficult topic with appropriate complexity.				
--Paper demonstrates a clear knowledge of the subject and works to further ideas put forth by class discussions.				
--Paper goes beyond the obvious aspects of the assignment, demonstrating careful attention on the part of student.				
--Paper is ambitious, creative or original in its approach.				

IV. Theological Reflection

Overall Paper/Essays	I	A	G	E
-- Paper/Essays demonstrate ability to reflect on scripture theologically.				
-- Paper/Essays demonstrate precision or depth in articulating theological ideas.				
-- Paper/Essays demonstrate ability to integrate theological ideas in a coherent manner.				
-- Paper/Essays reveal insight into the theological issues implied by the situation/problem.				
-- Paper/Essays grasp the pastoral implications of the theological vision implied in situation/problem.				

Comments:

Please note: only the items most applicable to this paper are marked.

Descriptions of grades

A = An excellent paper is distinguished by the following characteristics.

The paper has a strong and interesting thesis, persuasively supported with well-chosen and well-analyzed examples. The paper is well organized and well developed, with clear and effective transitions. The writing is clear and lucid, without errors in grammar, spelling or diction.

A- = The paper shares the characteristics of the **A** paper but one or two of them are average or good rather than excellent. An **A-** paper might also have a minor lapse in argument, organization or grammar.

The range from **B+** to **B-** comprises some lesser combination of the above elements:

B+ = The paper still has good or even great features but also one of the following weaknesses:

Thesis is predictable or too broad. Thesis is not completely supported. Not all the examples support the thesis; or an important example is ignored; or an example is not fully analyzed. Paper lacks a key transition. Paper contains sentences that are awkward or vague.

B = The paper contains some of the strengths outlined for an **A** paper but also more than one of the weaknesses above.

B- = Paper is consistently average or alternates repeatedly between good and bad elements.

C+ = The number of weaknesses begins to distract the reader from the paper's good elements.

C = Rather than a mix of strengths and weaknesses, the paper has mostly weak elements, mixed with some poor or missing ones:

Thesis is too obvious or too vague. Assertions are unsupported. Introduction or conclusion is ineffective. Organization is marred by missing transitions; or unwarranted or missing conclusions. Paper contains errors of grammar, word choice, or sentence structure. Paper relies on clichés rather than careful thought.

C- = Paper only minimally addresses the assignment. Some recognizable attempt to answer the question and organize a response.

D = Suggests incompetence. Paper is defined by its defects:

The assigned question is not addressed. The paper presents no thesis; no argument; no evidence; etc.

F = Demonstrates incompetence. Paper is unreadable, unrecognizable, or missing.