



The Bible ... *for Smarties*

“BEYOND BELIEF ... ?”: The Nicene Creed in the 21st Century

SYLLABUS

Summer 2026

Taught by
David Moseley, Ph.D.

Mondays ~ 6:00-8:00 p.m. PST
Taught Online via Zoom

Welcome to “***Beyond Belief ... ?***”: ***The Nicene Creed in the 21st Century***. This short seminar-style course explores the Nicene Creed through an interdisciplinary approach that explores the many dimensions at stake in the crafting of the Creed.

The Mission of the Class is to Nurture Students towards a Nuanced, Critical Interpretation and Understanding of the Text of the Nicene Creed, placing it in its Historical, Cultural, Political, Ecclesial, Philosophical and Theological Contexts.

The Church just celebrated a Big Birthday last year — the Nicene Creed was promulgated in 325 C.E. ... the Creed is 1,700 Years Young!

Week in and week out, Christians around the world — including Episcopalians — recite the words of the Nicene Creed written by the first Ecumenical Church Council over 16 centuries ago. The affirmations of the Creed form the foundational doctrines of Christianity. But what do these ancient articles of faith *mean*? Do we really know What we’re saying? And do we Mean what we say?

History is written by the winners. The Nicene Creed is almost as much concerned with clarifying what Christianity is not as much as it is in affirming positively what Christianity

is. Figuring out the subtleties and nuances of 4th Century theology and philosophy is as challenging today as it was one-and-a-half millennia ago when the church almost split apart because of one “iota” of meaning.

Please join us as we examine the background to the Nicene Council of 325 C.E.; the great arguments and controversies about doctrine and belief that split the early church; and the personalities of the combatants at the heart of the debate — especially the arch-heretic Arius, and Athanasius, the champion of orthodoxy. We will also examine the need for the Creed today, and identify some of the same old heresies dressed up in brand new clothes.

To truly understand the Nicene Creed requires appreciation of the following elements:

- 1) Understanding the **History and Politics of the Roman Empire** at the beginning of the 4th Century C.E., as government shifted from a recent brutal persecution of the church under Emperor Diocletian (284-305 C.E.), to the rise of a new Emperor, Constantine (306-337 C.E.), who would legalize and patronize Christianity, as much for political purposes than personal piety.
- 2) Understanding the decentralized regional conflicts in **Theology and Leadership within the Church** at the beginning of the 4th Century C.E. between the Greek-speaking East and the Latin-speaking West, in an era before Papal supremacy as power shifted eastwards from the old capital of Rome to the new capital of Constantinople.
- 3) Understanding the nuances of **Ancient Greek Philosophy and Early Church Theology** that underlie the bitter contests about concepts and vocabulary as the doctrine of the Trinity and Christianity evolves through its adolescence.
- 4) Understanding the **Personalities and Principles of the Main Players** at the Nicene Council in 325 C.E. and the immediate aftermath — from Emperor Constantine, his mother Helena, and his key advisor Eusebius ... to the “Arch-Heretic” Arius, and the great defender and champion of the Nicene settlement, Athanasius of Alexandria.
- 5) Understanding the **Major Doctrinal Subdivisions of Christian Systematic Theology** that account for the structure and themes of the Nicene Creed

Participants who have completed the Nicene Creed class will hopefully appreciate and understand all these multifaceted dimensions of this seminal moment in Church History ... and hear the Nicene Creed with new ears each Sunday during the liturgy.

Here is our Schedule for the six classes:

Week 1: Introduction — “Dimensions of a Perfect Storm”

(Monday 8th June 2026)

During the first introductory class, we will look at all the different strands that come together at the Council of Nicea ... from the worlds of Imperial Politics, Church In-fighting, Theology and Philosophy.

Week 2: The First Article — “God the Father, the Creator”

(Monday 15th June 2026)

The First Article of the Nicene Creed affirms Christian Monotheism while exploring the Doctrine of Creation through the work of God the Father.

Week 3: The Second Article — “God the Son, the Redeemer”

(Monday 22nd June 2026)

The Second Article of the Nicene Creed is by far the longest, most detailed, and most critical in addressing the objections of Arianism. It explores “Christology” — the Doctrine of the Person and Nature and Work of Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son.

Week 4: The Third Article — “God the Holy Spirit, the Multitasker”

(Monday 29th June 2026)

The Third Article of the Nicene Creed explores “Pneumatology” — the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and the many roles played by the Spirit in History and Theology.

Week 5: The Doctrine of the Trinity — “Three in One & One in Three”

(Monday 6th July 2026)

The Architecture of the Nicene Creed is organized around the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity — a Doctrine that still creates much confusion and misunderstanding, both inside and outside of the Church. We will attempt to explore and explain the Divine Mystery of the Trinity in this class.

Week 6: Conclusion — “The Need for the Creed in the 21st Century”

(Monday 13th July 2026)

The Arguments, Disputes and Conflicts in the early 4th Century C.E. Church are not the same as the Controversies and Crises in the early 21st Century Church. But some Heresies and Misunderstandings are remarkably persistent ... and other new ones have emerged that reflect the World and Culture which we live in today.

Materials and Class Format

There will be no textbook for this class, but we will be making repeated references to the Bible. The edition of the Bible I recommend for students is:

The New Oxford Annotated Bible - New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) with the Apocrypha (College Edition, 5th Ed.) edited by Michael Coogan (Oxford, 2018)

[The *New Oxford Annotated Bible* (5th Ed.) is currently \$57 new in hardback on Amazon (I strongly advise you get the hardback for durability), and contains a wealth of useful introductory essays, maps, and annotations – and is required for all “The Bible ... *for Smarties!*” Classes. Many of you will have a 4th or 5th Ed. from a previous class, that will be just fine. Just an FYI ... the new revised 6th Edition will be released in November 2026!]

Handouts, Outlines and copies of SlideShows will be provided, as well as access to other Online Resources. Ultimately, what you get out of the class will depend on what you decide to put into it. There will be no assigned readings or written assignments. You are most welcome to just sit and watch / listen quietly to the presentations and discussion during our weekly Zoom class meetings (with your camera on or off, as is your preference) ... and you're also most welcome to ask questions and engage in the discussion and debate about the meaning of the background and meaning of the Nicene Creed.

*****EVERY ZOOM CLASS IS RECORDED (AUDIO & VIDEO)!!!*****

Don't worry if you're not able to attend all the classes or have some travel or conflicts during the scheduled six weeks of classes. All classes are recorded, and the access code to the Zoom Recording can be sent the very next day, on request.

Course Instructor

David Moseley, Ph.D. Teaches Religious Studies & Philosophy and is Director of Global Education at The Bishop's School, La Jolla. Dr. Moseley holds undergraduate and graduate Degrees in Law, Theology and Philosophy from Oxford University; and a Doctorate in Theology & Music from Cambridge University. Dr. Moseley taught Theology and Biblical Studies at the University of San Diego for 16 years; he was formerly Theologian-in-Residence at St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral in San Diego; a founding member of the Faculty of the San Diego Diocesan School for Ministry, where he taught all the Biblical Studies classes for a decade; he has Led Trips to the "Holy Land"; and Teaches Adult Education Classes in Parishes throughout the County, and online through his "The Bible ... *for Smarties!*" program. Dr. Moseley's teaching style is enthusiastic, fun and engaging – he uses multimedia techniques and an interdisciplinary approach to fully explore the depth and nuance and inexhaustible fascination that he finds in the study of Biblical texts, Church History and Theology.

Registering for the Class

The cost of the class is \$150 (for 6 x 2-hr online classes — a total of 12 hours of class time). [Scholarships are available upon inquiry.]

If you'd like to take the Nicene Creed Short Summer class, you can either Venmo me the money (@David-Moseley-17); or pay using Zelle [my Zelle account is listed under my cell# (858) 414-8169 and/or my personal email address: djsmoseley@aim.com]; or mail a check made out to "David Moseley" with "Creed Class" in the Memo Line, depending on your preference:

Dr. David Moseley
P.O. Box 27031
San Diego
CA 92198

****Zoom Recordings of other "The Bible ... *for Smarties!*" classes are available for purchase, with access to all supporting materials (assignments and reading lists,**

outlines, slide shows, and other resources). Classes that are available on Zoom recordings include:

1. A Short Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics (Three 2-Hr Classes)
2. Hebrew Scriptures 1 (Twelve 2-Hr Classes) – Torah & Historical Books
3. Hebrew Scriptures 2 (Twelve 2-Hr Classes) – Prophets & The Writings
4. Christian Scriptures 1 (Twelve 2-Hr Classes) – The Christian Gospels
5. Christian Scriptures 2 (Twelve 2-Hr Classes) – Pauline Literature & All the Rest
6. The Parables of Jesus (Six 2-Hr Classes)

Please email me if you have any interest in purchasing access to these recordings.

And please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Dr. David Moseley
drdavidmoseley@gmail.com
Cell: (858) 414-8169

Best Wishes for the Class!



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