

Creeds of the Kehillah ~ Part 28

The Nicene Creed ~ Part 14

In our last post, we continued to explore the **Nicene Creed**. In this post, we begin to dig into the third article of faith in the **Nicene Creed**.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son, He is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

WE BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

The **Council of Nicaea** in 325 CE provided a short, concise confession of the **Ruach** in its **Creedal** formulation. It simply said: **We believe in the Holy Spirit**. It said this, however, in the context of a trinitarian structure that Yeshua first established Himself when He listed the **Ruach** along with Himself and the **Father** in the baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19: *Therefore, go and make people from all nations into talmidim, immersing them into the reality of the Father, the Son, and the Ruach HaKodesh*. These words, along with the other words recorded in **John** and the other **Gospels**, contain an implicit confession by **Yeshua**, and by the **Kehillah**, which followed him, that the **Ruach** exists along with the **Father** and the **Son** as a personal being - what the **Cappadocians** came to refer to later as a hypostatic being. This being has His individual and complete identity, in and of itself.

The subsequent history of the **Kehillah** in **Acts** bears out the truth of **Yeshua's** words. The wind that blew at **Shavuot** (Pentecost) was not an impersonal force or an act of nature or some amorphous spiritual creature. The **Ruach** was the living **God**, personally present as the **Paraclete**, the **Comforter**, strengthening and encouraging, living among, and giving life to a thriving community of **Believers** in the first century and beyond. The recorded history of the **Gospels** and the letters of **Sha'ul** and **Kefa** paint the picture of a personal **Ruach** who can be lied to and resisted. The **Ruach** is called **God**. He is referred to as a witness to **Yeshua** alongside the apostles and as collaborating in decisions such as those at the council of Jerusalem. He fills the faithful. He is given by grace and received by faith. The **Ruach** speaks to individuals such as **Philip**, **Kefa**, and **Sha'ul** as well as to groups. The **Ruach** also prevents **Sha'ul** from entering **Asia** or **Bythinia**. He appoints bishops for the **Kehillah**. We hear of the **Ruach's** work in **Corinth** manifested in the speaking of tongues, which **Sha'ul** himself experienced. Thus, the **Ruach** was experienced as **God** interacting with His people and His **Kehillah**.

And yet, it is safe to say that the person of the **Ruach** was perceived as the most mysterious of the three persons of the **Trinity**. **Father** and **Son** are easy to picture as persons. Not so the **Ruach**. **Athanasius** called the **Ruach** the image of the **Son** even as the **Son** was the image of the **Father**. As **Torrance** notes, it may seem rather strange at first to think of the **Ruach** as the *"Image"* of the **Son** until one begins to realize that the **Ruach** himself is *imageless*. But if the **Father** and the **Son** and the **Ruach** are exact, *"it must be in an ineffable, imageless and wholly spiritual way that we are to think of them and of their relations with one another in the Holy Trinity."*

The **Nicene Creed** of 325 CE reflected this perception of the **Ruach** as a kind of imageless enigma about whom the Scriptures were relatively silent. But up until that time, there was no impetus to speak further about **Ruach** in defining who or what he was. The **Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed** of 381 CE expanded on

what the **Kehillah** believed about the **Ruach** primarily because of the challenge of heretical groups such as the **Eunomians** and **Pneumatomachians** who considered the **Ruach** a divine created being, but nothing more. Before the controversy over the **Ruach** erupted, however, a simple confession of belief in the **Ruach**, along with the **Father** and the **Son**, in the **Creed** and the liturgical and sacramental life of the **Kehillah** was considered adequate, as the **Ruach** was worshiped along with the **Father** and the **Son** in the **Kehillah's** hymns, prayers, blessings, baptisms, and doxology.¹

In my next post, we continue to dig into the third article of the **Nicene Creed: We Believe in The Holy Spirit**.

¹ Elowsky, J. C., & Oden, T. C. (Eds.). (2009). **We Believe in the Holy Spirit** (Vol. 4, pp. 1–2).