

Creeds of the Kehillah ~ Part 29

The Nicene Creed ~ Part 15

In our last post, we continued to explore the **Nicene Creed**. In this post, we continue 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 **Kehillah**.
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.

The Lord

The time between the first iteration of the **Creed** and its second in 381CE proved to be a tumultuous time in understanding the short phrase of the **Creed** of 325CE meant when it confessed, **We believe in the Ruach**. Around the middle of the fourth century, challenges began to emerge from the **Arians**, the **Pneumatomachians** (or “Spirit-fighters”), and from **Eunomius** as to what this confession meant. They spoke of belief in the **Spirit** as a creature and as less than **God**. In working out the implications of its confession of belief in the **Ruach**, the ancient **Messianic** writers of the mid-fourth century—as well as their opponents—began to understand that whatever happened with the doctrine of the **Son** also affected the doctrine of the **Ruach** and vice versa. If the **Son** is not fully **God**, the **Spirit** is not fully **God**; and if the **Spirit** is not fully **God**, then neither is the **Son**. It was no longer enough to confess belief in the **Ruach**. If an **Arian** or a **Pneumatomachians** could profess belief in the **Ruach** just as quickly as an orthodox **Believers**, then the time had come to clarify what the **Kehillah** believed about the **Ruach**.

By the time of the **Second Ecumenical Council** in 381CE, there is every indication that the **Council** found itself somewhat divided in its articulation of belief about the **Ruach**. Although we have less information about the discussions that went on at the **Second Ecumenical Council** than of any other, we know thirty-six Macedonian bishops at the **Council** would not have affirmed anything more than the **Ruach** was a creature, albeit a high and holy creature. Their presence and subsequent departure may explain the reaction of **Gregory of Nazianzus**, who presided at the **Council** for a time, who asked directly in one of his orations at the time if the **Ruach** is **God**. His frustration in getting a clear answer to this question perhaps explains why he offered his resignation in the middle of the **Council**.

Politically speaking, the bishops had learned their lesson from the previous **Council’s** discussion of the term of the same essence, which the **Arians** had charged was an invalid term because it was not found in Scripture. Although the **Cappadocians** soundly answered this objection, the wording that ultimately won the day in speaking of the **Ruach** was decidedly and deliberately **Scriptural**.

This was a delicate political time in the life of **Kehillah** and state, both of which were looking for a united front against threats from without. The language of the third article of the **Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed** of 381CE, in language that some might consider a compromise, nowhere explicitly calls the **Ruach God**. And yet, the terminology they used can lead to no other conclusion.

Thus, other phrases were added to the **Creed** to clarify the **Kehillah’s** understanding of the **Ruach**. The way had been prepared for these additions earlier in the middle of the century by **Cyril of Jerusalem** in his

Catechetical Lectures, Athanasius, and his *Four Letters to Serapion* (371CE) as well as his **Synodal** letters, **Basil of Caesarea**, and his treatise *On the Ruach* (374CE).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).