

Creeds of the Kehillah ~ Part 33

The Nicene Creed ~ Part 19

In our last post, we continued to explore the **Nicene Creed**. In this post, we continue to dig into the third article of faith, keeping with the phrase **the giver of life** 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.

THE GIVER OF LIFE ~ *Christ's Life in Us Through the Spirit – Theosis*¹

Sha'ul is the primary source for the **kehillah's** teaching on **Justification** and its teaching of incorporation and union with **Yeshua** via the **Ruach**. **Sha'ul** often uses the phrase **in Yeshua** or **in Yeshua Messiah** to indicate a change in our relationship with God and a change in us through our incorporation into **Yeshua**. However, it is the apostle Kefa who has provided the **kehillah** with the clearest text concerning our participation in the divine nature. This concept has been found predominantly in the East, although the selections here will demonstrate that this was teaching in the West. In the first chapter of his second letter, **Kefa** writes:

³ God's power has given us everything we need for life and godliness, through our knowing the One who called us to His own glory and goodness. ⁴ By these He has given us valuable and superlatively great promises so that through them you might come to share in God's nature and escape the corruption which evil desires have brought into the world. ~ 2 Kefa 1:3-4 (CJB)

Kefa and **Sha'ul** no doubt took this idea from **Yeshua** as inspired writers. But what did they have in mind when they spoke of **Believers** being in **Yeshua** and partakers of the divine nature? This teaches the **kehillah** of which many in the West, including evangelicals and some Roman Catholics, are unaware. What follows is an attempt to introduce what this teaching is about and to explore the significant place and influence this teaching exerted in the early **kehillah's** understanding of the **Ruach's** work in us.

The ancient writers believed that the apostles were speaking of deification. Their choice of such terminology was not cavalier. It was a bold and deliberate move meant to evoke and challenge the pagan language of exaltation. Human beings, especially heroes, sages, and ultimately emperors, advanced to the rank of deity. However, those writers avoided the term deification because it fundamentally transgressed on the divine prerogative, something that some present-day **Believers** believe occurs in the doctrine of **Theosis**, although such a transgression could not have been further from the patristic mind. Early **Believers** chose a polemical term and concept in a deliberate confrontation with the paganism of their day to differentiate what it truly meant to partake of the divine nature of the one true **God**. They were careful to note that it was not the

¹ **Theosis** is the belief, mostly found within the Eastern Orthodox Church, that a **Believer** can experience a union with **God** and become like Him so much that they participate in the divine nature. This concept is also known as "deification." **Theosis** does not mean that they become Gods or merge with God but that they are deified. They participate in the "energies" of God with which He reveals Himself to us in creation.

polytheism of their pagan neighbors they were espousing. Instead, as **Athanasius** states, “**it is as ‘sons,’ not as the Son**”; “**as ‘gods,’ not as God himself**” that we partake of the divine nature. This is an important distinction since the **Greek kehillah** emphasized only one **God** by nature over classical religion with its deified men and women and its anthropomorphic gods and goddesses.

According to the orthodox, scriptural understanding of **Theosis**, we are given the right to become children of **God** by grace as we are born of **God** through the waters of baptism. We thus become sons and daughters of **God** at our baptism. What follows, then, is an ongoing process of **sanctification** by which we, through the indwelling of the **Ruach**, become more and more conformed to the image of our **God** and **Father** in which we were created. This conforming process ultimately realizes its full potential as the just receive their promised inheritance in heaven when their own glorious transfiguration takes place in the new heavenly kingdom. It is both a moral and ontological ascent toward the fullness of life and, ultimately, eternal life in communion with the divine, which was **God’s** original intention for humanity all along.²

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

² Elowsky, J. C., & Oden, T. C. (Eds.). (2009). **We Believe in the Holy Spirit** (Vol. 4, pp. 37–38).