

Creeds of the Kehillah ~ Part 3

The Apostles' Creed ~ Part 2

This post will begin to take a closer look at the **Apostles' Creed** to learn more about what we affirm that we believe.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

"I"

The first word is perhaps the strangest part of the whole **Apostles' Creed**: **"I."** Who is this **I**? Whose voice is speaking in the creed. I remember in the late '60s, the Episcopal Church was in the process of updating the 1928 Book of Common Prayer. One of the changes that was proposed was changing the "I" to "We." I did not like that idea at all! I knew what I believed, but I was not so certain about the others in the service.

In the past, one of the things that made a wedding special was the fact that you got to say exactly the same words that everybody else said. When a couple said their vows, they were not just expressing their own feelings. They did not use their own words; they used the same words that their parents and their ancestors had spoken, and they made those words their own.

But today we are skeptical about the past. We are skeptical about anything that is merely handed down to us. We assume that the truest thing we could ever say would be something we had made up ourselves.

In the same way, **Believers** today are often suspicious of **creeds**. Many churches are more comfortable with mission statements than with **creeds**. The thing about a Mission or What We Believe Statement is you always get to make it up for yourself. It is like writing your own wedding vows.

I believe. Who is the "I" that speaks when we make this confession? It is the body of the **Messiah**. It is a community stretched out across history. The whole company of **Messiah's** followers go down into the waters of Baptism, crying out the threefold "I believe!" In Baptism nobody is invited to come up with their own personal statement of belief. All are invited to be immersed into a reality beyond themselves and to join their individual voices to a communal voice that transcends them all. The truest and most important things we can ever say are not individual words but communal words.

"Believe"

When politicians make promises, we do not really expect them to keep their word. We understand that promises are motivated by self-interest, that words are tactics to achieve other aims. And we are not just cynical about other people's promises. We lack confidence in our own words too.

Nevertheless, when we say the **Apostles' Creed**, we are reminded that life itself is founded on trust. **Believers** in the ancient church went naked to the waters of Baptism. The second birth is like the first. We are totally dependent. We bring nothing with us except life. The birth cry of Baptism is the threefold "I believe" of the **Creed**, a cry of total trust in the **Triune God**.

The **creed** is full of mysterious things. It speaks of things that I cannot immediately observe or verify for myself. I believe in **God**, the **Creator**. I believe in **Yeshua HaMashiach, God** incarnate. I believe in the **Ruach HaKodesh, God** invisibly transfiguring creation from within. How could I prove the truth of these statements? How could I know for sure? When I take the first step, I start to see the whole world through the

eyes of **God's** promise. I start to live in an environment of trust. And then I learn from experience that **God** is good.

"In God the Father"

What do we believe about **God**? Right away the creed uses the language of Scripture: **God** is **Father**. It is an echo of revelation when Christians use this word. It is not an idea based on speculation or philosophical reasoning. **Yeshua** reveals **God** as his **Father**. He relates to **God** as his own **Father** and invites his followers to share in the same relationship.

Yeshua's relationship to **God** is unique but also inclusive. His followers stand on the inside of **Yeshua's** unique relationship to **God**. **Yeshua** calls **God** "**Abba, Father**" (Mark 14:36), and His followers are empowered by the **Ruach** to pray in the same way (Rom 8:15–16). That is what it means to be baptized into the **Triune God**. By the **Ruach** we are immersed into the life of **Yeshua** so that we come to share in His position before **God**.

We speak to **God**, and **God** listens to us, as if we were **Yeshua**. **Yeshua** is **God's** child by nature, and we become **God's** children by grace. **Yeshua** is born of **God**; we are adopted. So, when we confess that **God** is "**Father**," it is not a theological idea but a confession of the defining relationship of our lives. We call **God** "**Father**" because that is what **Yeshua** calls **God**, and because **Yeshua** has invited us to relate to **God** in the same way. In other words, we call **God** "**Father**" because of revelation.

If the word "**Father**" refers to a relation of origin within **God**, then we can draw one important conclusion: **God** is not only **Father** but also **Son**. These words, "**Father**" and "**Son**," are relational terms. Neither would make sense without the other. Writing in the second century, **Tertullian** was the first to develop this simple but important insight: "**Father makes son, and son makes father.... A father must have a son to be a father, and a son must have a father to be a son.**" When we confess that **God** is eternally **Father**, we always have in mind as well the eternal reality of the Son.¹

In my next post, we will continue to examine the **Apostle's Creed** in detail.

¹ The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism.