

Creeds of the Kehillah ~ Part 22

The Nicene Creed ~ Part 8

In our last post, we continued to explore the **Nicene Creed**. This post digs a little deeper into the actual articles of faith in the **Nicene Creed**.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, **Light from Light,**
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through Him, all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
He came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake, He was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered death and was buried.
On the third day He rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and His kingdom will have no end.

LIGHT FROM LIGHT

The Scripture, throughout, favors the analogy of **God's** being as light and its energy in the world being experienced as an active and life-giving radiance. The first spoken "*word*" of **God** in the Genesis creation account was "*Let there be light.*" **Messianic** theologians noted this, as they reflected on **God's** ultimate **Word**, and ever afterwards they connected with the image of light as the finest biblical type for conceiving the character of **God's** creative force.

The psalmist spoke of the "light of **God's** face" falling as a blessing on **Isra'el** and of **God** as being "*rapped in light as in a robe*," (Ps. 104:2) a text that entered the fabric of **Messianic** prayer as the main psalm of evening worship. The notion of light was also prevalent in Scripture as a symbol of the observance of the **Torah** and of moral fidelity. When **Isaiah** spoke of the renewal **God** had promised His people, a text that the early **Messianics** from the beginning saw fulfilled in the advent of the incarnate **Lord**, he spoke of **Isra'el** seeing *a great light* that *had dawned on them*. (Isa. 9:2) The epiphany of **God** to **Moshe** at Sinai is described in terms that suggest it is a light so intense that a mere human cannot look on it and live. **Moshe** has to veil his face to speak to the **Isra'eli**, a text that was before the minds of the Evangelists who narrated the story of the transfiguration of **Yeshua**, who emitted the light of the **Glory-Shekinah** of the **Father** in an important and central Gospel episode. The symbol of light was therefore a ready symbol of the glory of **God** to the earliest **Messianic** theologians, and from the outset the Lord was described as *a light for the Gentiles*, the divine light that was to come into the world for its salvation and illumination. When the creed refers to the **Son of God** as **Light from Light**, therefore, it is specifically annotating the relationship of **Son** to **Father** and describing it in biblical terms as the single **Glory of God** shining in the person and the saving work of the **Son**. The image of light from light inspired whole generations of theologians across many centuries, who saw it as a vivid example of the divine unity and harmony of action, as well as a powerful message to underline

that all the incarnate economy was motivated by **God's** desire to illuminate His creation and elect a transfigured people.

TRUE GOD FROM TRUE GOD

This creedal clause is evidently a repetition of the previous one "**God from God.**" From the third century onwards **Origen** of Alexandria's theology had become widespread. This great **Messianic** thinker had many insights in his large-scale Logos theology that were traditional and favored a view of the eternal and divine status of the **Son**, but he was also concerned to mark a strong distinction between the being of **God** the **Father** and that of **God the Son**. It is a distinction that he tended to make with formulas of his own, speculative reflections that in the next generation after him caused much controversy among the interpreters who continued to read him. One of **Origen's** distinctions was to call the **Father very God** and the **Word** simply **God**. It would be something comparable to an attempt to distinguish between **God** and **God**. He was always more than sensitive to such hidden mysteries in the minute details of the scriptural verses, especially those that contained the direct words of the Logos. Several of the surviving Origenian scholars of the early fourth century were still using such terminology, which many had found defective even in the third century, and the problem flared up in the early years of the **Arian** crisis, when both sides of the **Nicene** fence (**Arius** as well as **Athanasius**) declared straightforwardly that divinity, being an absolute category, was not capable of such distinctions as superior and inferior, of **God** and **God**. One of the real causes of the Nicene crisis was, in fact, the collapse of some parts of the antique Origenian system of theological categorizations.¹

In my next post, we continue to dig into the second article of the **Nicene Creed: We Believe in One Lord Jesus Christ.**

¹ McGuckin, J. A., & Oden, T. C. (Eds.). (2009). **We Believe in One Lord Jesus Christ** (Vol. 2, pp. 53–54).