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The God of the Amen

by T. Austin-Sparks

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"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness" (Rev. 3:14).

"So that he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth, and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth" or as the margin has it, "He who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God Amen; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God Amen" (Is. 65:16).

"For how many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea: wherefore also through him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us" (2 Cor. 1:20).

You will see from the passages in Revelation and Isaiah, that 'Amen' is a title, a designation, a description of God. His Name is the 'Amen', the God of the 'Amen'. We know what we mean when we use that word. We mean a note of affirmation, that there is nothing from which we dissent and everything with which we agree. We are saying, 'Let it be like that - Amen!' And that is a description of God; that is His Name. The description can be summed up in one fragment of Scripture: "the Father of Lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (Jas. 1:17). He is always the same, absolutely reliable, positive, definite, sure, for He is the God of the 'Amen'.

Isaiah Looks Beyond the Captivity and the Cross

Now the contexts of these two passages are very enlightening as to the use made of the title on each occasion.

In Isaiah 65, you will see that we are near the end of the prophecies; we are on the other side of the judgment of Israel, that is on the other side of the exile and the captivity. We are with the remnant

that returned. The new day is presented in such verses as:- *"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Is. 60:1).*

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; that she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins" (Is. 40:1,2).

Again, in this chapter in which our verse is found, the Lord says: "I create new heavens and a new earth" (65:17). A new day is in view, and on that ground, in that setting and context, these words occur. They are prospective as you see: 'he that, then, on that ground, in that day, blesseth himself... he that sweareth... in that day, on this new ground...' These words look on into the future and we may say here at once, that it is to the day which has come, to the day in which we live, that these prophecies point so clearly. The prophecies after chapter 53, the chapter of the Cross and the suffering, point so clearly to this day beyond the Cross, the day of His resurrection, the day of the Spirit; this is the day - our day - in which God is spoken of as the God of the 'Amen' - God, re-affirming, and God reaffirmed.

But to revert to Israel's history: it had looked for seventy long, weary, tragic, desolate years, as though everything was hopeless; all seemed lost. Look at Jerusalem during those seventy years; look at the land in its desolation and ruin, with the glory gone, everything broken down, and tragedy written large everywhere. The visitors to that country wagging their heads, remembering the past, were saying, 'Aha, aha; well, well; Look at this!' And while that cry, like a sob, from the prophet: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow" (Lam. 1:12), may be truly put into the mouth of the Lord Jesus, on the Cross, it literally relates to this very situation. It was the cry of the land.

Of such a situation we should say today, 'Well, that is an end of that! There is not much prospect there.' But it is in that setting, just in a situation like that, that these words occur. He is the God of the 'Amen'! He is re-affirming that, despite of everything, He has not changed, He has not given up, He is not in despair. He is the God whose decisions and determinations are absolute and final, and it does not matter to those decisions what happens. He remains the God of the 'Amen'. Here He is then, in this title, re-affirming, that although all this has happened, a remnant shall return. There shall yet be a 'taking root downward, and a bearing fruit upward' (Is. 37:31). God cannot ultimately be cheated of His purpose; He is the God of the 'Amen'.

Confidence in the God of Hope

Here, then, is the mighty re-affirmation or declaration, like something rising out of the ashes. Yes, there are ashes and desolation and mourning and the spirit of heaviness and all these things, yet, there arises out of the midst an unchanged and unchangeable God.

And so we come to these words: "He who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God Amen". What does that mean? It sounds so strange, does it not? It sounds a little awkward; but what does it mean? Well, I think it just means this, quite simply - that the ground of our hope, of our blessing, of our prospect, and of our new joy, is that God is the same for ever. We can count on Him. There never was such a terrible threat to His purposes; there never was such a seeming desolation in the realm of God's election. And yet, and yet, He has not accepted that as an end; He has not accepted that as cancelling out what He has set His hand to do. He still remains firm, true, steadfast for ever, the God 'Amen'. What a blessing! if only we could get hold of it. We are certainly not going to bless ourselves for this, that, and the other thing; that is, to congratulate ourselves on things. Very

often it is going to be like this; that there is nothing in the appearance and condition of things in which we can bless ourselves, but that we can bless ourselves in God 'Amen'.

Then the verse continues, "and he that *sweareth* in the earth shall *swear* by the God Amen". What does that mean? Well, you see, the swearing was always related to covenant, was it not? And while that would open up far too large a field for this brief consideration, the point is just this: you can commit yourself to this God, you can depend upon Him as the covenant-keeping God, and you can swear by Him. There is nothing else in all this world that you can swear by, and no one else; everything else will let you down, but you can swear by Him - God 'Amen' - He will not let you down.

The Lord's Insistent Appeal for Reality

Turning now to the passage in the Book of the Revelation, notice the context there. Christ, the Amen, is speaking to the church in Laodicea. *Laodicea* - why, that very word and name is the synonym for what is indefinite, indistinctive, weak, and mixed! "Thou are... neither hot nor cold"; 'there is no distinctiveness and no definiteness about you. You are neither one thing nor the other.' And there are a lot of other things said about Laodicea, all representing a situation that is utterly unreliable and unsatisfactory; in one word, it is false. "Thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches," and you do not know that it is utterly false, that "thou art... poor" - thou art... poor! You think that you can see, and do not know that you are blind. You say: 'we are clothed; we have apparel; we have all we need'; and you do not know that you are naked before God. What a picture of falsehood. And whenever there is a falsehood, catastrophe is sure to follow sooner or later; a lie will always be found out. This is a very insecure position.

"These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness" - you see, the very context interprets and explains the title. The Lord is here calling Laodicea back to that which is represented by His own name and nature. There is nothing mixed, confused and contradictory about Him. There is no falsehood with Him, nothing like this with Him, and so His call is for recovery at the end. This is the last phase. At the end He is calling His Church back to complete distinctiveness, that there shall be no doubt whatever as to where we stand, as to where we are going. It is a great thing in these days, to meet people who know exactly what they are after, with no two minds about it; they are settled; they are fixed; there is no variableness with them. It is a great thing in these days to find such people. And the Lord says, It will be a great thing if the Church can be like that in the end, if there can be such a testimony. This, surely, is the meaning of 'overcoming' in the case of Laodicea. 'Overcoming' means that all uncertainty, indefiniteness, weakness, vacillation, duplicity, and everything of that character, is eliminated. The overcomers are people who know where they stand, where they are going, what they are after, people who have got the positive note in their midst, the Amen, the note of certainty.

That is the last word of the Spirit to the Church in this dispensation. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches" (Rev. 3:22). The last word of the Spirit to the Church in this dispensation - if we are to accept the dispensational interpretation of these messages to the seven churches - a word called out apparently by the very conditions, is this, 'Away with all indistinctiveness in your testimony, all uncertainty in your note, all indefiniteness in your goings, and let there be certainty, positiveness, confidence and assurance; let there be no beating the air, but a reaching the mark all the time.' This is the word of the Spirit.

The Great 'Amens' of Christ

Now you notice that this is not only a title ascribed to God in the Old Testament, but also one of the titles of Jesus in the New. It is Jesus who says, "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness", the Amen, the I AM.

Now I am quite sure you are perfectly familiar with the fact that on the twelve or so occasions, when Jesus said, twice over, "Verily, verily...", according to our version and translation, the Greek word is "Amen", so that we may read, "Amen, Amen, I say unto you..." And realising what that implies, the mighty affirmation, you can understand better the things that follow. If Jesus says, "Verily, verily" - "Amen, Amen... I am the door...", there is a tremendous emphasis on that; in other words, you cannot get in any other way (John 10:7). Now I am not going to enlarge upon this, but you see the point. Here He is, affirming that He is the 'Amen'. In all of these twelve or more different connections He speaks of Himself in this way. He is the 'Amen'.

The Twofold Work of the Amen

But then, His work also was the work of the 'Amen'. To this there were two aspects, namely, death and resurrection. In order to see something of the significance of His death, let us go back to the Book of Deuteronomy 27. There you find all the curses that would come upon the people if they were disobedient to the Lord, and turned away from Him to serve other gods, a whole long list of the curses that would come. We note two things: that the Levites, as representing the people, are required to affirm the curses, and then at the end, "all the people shall say, Amen". By this they meant, 'Yes, if we do turn away, if we are unfaithful, if we reject the Lord, let it be like that, let all the curses come upon us'. *They had to accept it.*

Dear friends, in the death of the Lord Jesus, there was the mighty, inclusive Amen to all the curses. Terrible thought! He was made a curse for us. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). As He hung there, viewing man's sin, departure from God, unfaithfulness and infidelity, and all that man had done against God, He entered into the consequences of the curse. He took the curse for it all upon Himself, and said, 'Amen, it is quite right, it must be'. He gave His Amen to the curse! But it was final! He swallowed up all the curse in His death, with a mighty affirmation, 'God is right - His judgment is just - Amen!'

But in His resurrection, we have the other side of His work as the 'Amen'. It is as the risen One that He appears to Laodicea, as you notice - "I am... the Living one... I am alive for evermore..." (Rev. 1:17,18). Here we are on the resurrection side, and in the resurrection, as Paul tells us, we are justified by His life (Rom. 4:25). Here is the Amen of justification! In His death, as we have seen, is the affirmation that God is right. You see, we never get through until we have come to the place where we say: 'In that judgment of the Lord Jesus on the Cross, God was right, where I am concerned. I was there, and God was right'. Until we come right down there, and say, 'Yes, Amen, God was right in judging me as a sinner, as an unfaithful one, God was right', we never get through to the other side. When we have got there, to that terrible Amen of judgment and death, by faith, we come to the place where we can stand on the other side of the Amen, the Amen of justification by His life. Yes, the mighty affirmation of God is that we are justified by His life! We are justified by faith in Jesus Christ. You see then, that God has committed Himself. God has put His stamp and His seal upon that Amen! Just as truly as you are condemned to judgment in His death, so truly are you raised to justification in His life, for, "Jesus our Lord... was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). Amen! God says: Amen! He is committed to that.

Faith in the God of the Amen

Now we must close. Is not this word needed in our day? Was there ever a time of greater uncertainty, perhaps even amongst many of the Lord's people? On every hand there are questions and doubts, weakening, loosening and disintegrating lives, with discouragement, disillusionment and disappointment all weakening the heart and loosening the springs of confidence and faith. There is so much today to cause a great questionmark to stand over everything. Are you feeling like that? We are all tempted to ask big questions about the biggest things, are we not? As we look within and without, our hearts could very often lose their confident assurance.

In a day such as this, it is well for us to come back and hear Him say concerning the purpose to which He has committed Himself, 'I am the Amen'. He has committed Himself to it as the 'Amen', the unchangeable, the unalterable One, with whom there is no variableness. He is holding to it through everything. Amen is written over His purpose. God is the God Amen. Christ is on the throne, and His Name is the 'Amen'; His rule is the rule of the 'Amen': He has the last word in everything.

We must also see that it is the Holy Spirit who is speaking the words of the 'Amen' - "These things saith the Amen... He that hath an ear, let him hear what *the Spirit* saith..." The Spirit is the power for realising the purpose and effecting the rule. The Three Persons of the Trinity are one God; they share this Name, this title, this description, the 'Amen', the 'Amen'. The Lord strengthen our faith in Himself.