**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**ISAIAH-093. THE GOD OF THE AMEN by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"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."*

*Isaiah 65:16*

The full beauty and significance of these remarkable words are only reached when we attend to the literal rendering of a part of them which is obscured in our version. As they stand in the original they have, in both cases, instead of the vague expression, The God of truth, the singularly picturesque one, The God of the Amen.

**I. Note the meaning of the name.**

Now, Amen is an adjective, which means literally firm, true, reliable, or the like. And, as we know, its liturgical use is that, in the olden time, and to some extent in the present time, it was the habit of the listening people to utter it at the close of prayer or praise. But besides this use at the end of some one else's statement, which the sayer of the Amen confirms by its utterance, we also find it used at the beginning of a statement, by the speaker, in order to confirm his own utterance by it.

And these two uses of the expression reposing on its plain meaning, in the first instance signifying, I tell you that it is so; and in the second instance signifying, So may it be! or, So we believe it is, underlie this grand title which God takes to Himself here, the God of the Amen, both His Amen and ours. So that the thought opens up very beautifully and simply into these two, His truth and our faith.

First, it emphasises the absolute truthfulness of every word that comes from His lips. There is implied in the title that He really has spoken, and declared to man something of His will, something of His nature, something of His purposes, something of our destiny. And now He puts, as it were, the broad seal upon the charter and says, Amen! Verily it is so, and My word of Revelation is no man's imagination, and My word of command is the absolute unveiling of human duty and human perfectness, and My word of promise is that upon which a man may rest all his weight and be safe for ever. God's word is Amen! man's word is perhaps. For in regard to the foundation truths of man's belief and experience and need, no human tongue can venture to utter its own asseverations with nothing behind them but itself, and expect men to accept them; but that is exactly what God does, and alone has the right to do. His word absolutely, and through and through, in every fibre of it, is reliable and true.

Now do not forget that there was one who came to us and said, Amen! Amen! I say unto you. Jesus Christ, in all His deep and wonderful utterances, arrogated to Himself the right which God here declares to be exclusively His, and He said, I too have, and I too exercise, the right and the authority to lay My utterances down before you, and expect you to take them because of nothing else than because I say them. God is the God of the Amen! The last book of Scripture, when it draws back the curtain from the mysteries of the glorified session of Jesus Christ at the right hand of God, makes Him say to us, These things saith the Amen! And if you want to know what that means, its explanation follows in the next clause, the faithful and true witness.

But then, on the other hand, necessarily involved in this title, though capable of being separately considered, is not only the absolute truthfulness of the divine word, but also the thorough-going reliance, on our parts, which that word expects and demands. God's Amen, and Verily, of confirmation, should ever cause the Amen of acceptance and assent to leap from our lips. If He begins with that mighty word, so soon as the solemn voice has ceased its echo should rise from our hearts. The city that cares for the charter which its King has given it will prepare a fitting, golden receptacle in which to treasure it. And the men who believe that God in very deed has spoken laws that illuminate, and commandments that guide, and promises that calm and strengthen and fulfil themselves, will surely prepare in their hearts an appropriate receptacle for those precious and infallible words. God's truth has corresponding to it our trust. God's faithfulness demands, and is only adequately met by, our faith. If He gives us the sure foundation to build upon, it will be a shame for us to bring wood, hay, stubble, and build these upon the Rock of Ages. The building should correspond with its foundation, and the faith which grasps the sure word should have in it something of the unchangeableness and certainty and absoluteness of that word which it grasps. If His revelation of Himself is certain, you and I ought to be certain of His revelation of Himself. Our certitude should correspond to its certainty.

Ah! my friend, what a miserable contrast there is between the firm, unshaken, solid security of the divine word upon which we say that we trust, and the poor, feeble, broken trust which we build upon it. Let not that man think that He shall receive anything of the Lord; but let us expect, as well as ask, in faith, nothing wavering; and let our Amen! ring out in answer to God's.

The Apostle Paul has a striking echo of the words of my text in the second Epistle to the Corinthians: All the promises of God in Him are yea! and through Him also is the Amen! The assent, full, swift, frank --the assent of the believing heart to the great word of God comes through the same channel, and reaches God by the same way, as God's word on which it builds comes to us. The God of the Amen, in both senses of the word, is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the seal as well as the substance of the divine promises, and whose voice in us is the answer to, and the grasp of, the promises of which He is the substance and soul.

**II. Now notice, next, how this God of the Amen is, by reason of that very characteristic, the source of all blessing.**

He who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of Truth. That phrase of blessing oneself in, which is a frequent Old Testament expression, is roughly equivalent to invoking, and therefore receiving, blessing from. You find it, for instance, in the seventy-second Psalm, in that grand burst which closes one of the books of the Psalter and hails the coming of the Messianic times, of which my text also is a prediction. Men shall be blessed in Him, or rather, shall bless themselves in Him, which is a declaration, that all needful benediction shall come down upon humanity through the coming Messias, as well as that men shall recognise in that Messias the source of all their blessing and good. So the text declares that, in those days that are yet to come, the whole earth shall be filled with men whose eyes have been purged from ignorance and sin, and from the illusions of sense and the fascinations of folly, and who have learned that only in the God of the Amen is the blessing of their life to be found.

Of course it is so. For only on Him can I lean all my weight and be sure that the stay will not give. All other bridges across the great abysses which we have to traverse or be lost in them, are like those snow-cornices upon some Alp, which may break when the climber is on the very middle of them, and let him down into blackness out of which he will never struggle. There is only one path clear across the deepest gulf, which we poor pilgrims can tread with absolute safety that it will never yield beneath our feet. My brother! there is one support that is safe, and one stay upon which a man can lean his whole weight and be sure that the staff will never either break or pierce his palm, and that is the faithful God, in whose realm are no disappointments, amongst whose trusters are no heart-broken and deceived men, but who gives bountifully, and over and above all that we are able to ask or think. They who have made experience, as we have all made experience, of the insufficiency of earthly utterances, of the doubtfulness of the clearest words of men, of the possible incapacity of the most loving, to be what they pledge themselves to be, and of the certainty that even if they are so for a while they cannot be so always--have surely learned one half, at least, of the lesson that life is meant to teach us; and it is our own fault if we have not bettered it with the better half, having uncoiled the tendrils of our hearts from the rotten props round which they have been too apt to twine themselves, and wreathed them about the pillars of the eternal throne, which can never shake nor fail. He that blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself--unless he is a fool--in the God of the Amen! and not in the man of the peradventure.

**III. Lastly, note how the God of the Amen should be the pattern of His servants.**

He that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth, or, of the Amen. The prophet deduces from the name the solemn thought that those who truly feel its significance will shape their words accordingly, and act and speak so that they shall not fear to call His pure eyes to witness that there are neither, hypocrisy, nor insincerity, nor vacillation, nor the hidden things of dishonesty nor any of the skulking meannesses of craft and self-seeking in them. I swear by the God of the Amen, and call Thy faithfulness to witness that I am trying to be like Thee, that is what we ought to do if we call ourselves Christians. If we have any hold at all of Him, and of His love, and of the greatness and majesty of His faithfulness, we shall try to make our poor little lives, in such measure as the dewdrops may be like the sun, radiant like His, and of the same shape as His, for the dewdrop and the sun are both of them spheres. That is exactly what the apostle does, in that same chapter in 2 Cor., to which I already referred. He takes these very thoughts of my text, and in their double aspect too, and says, Just because God is faithful, do you Corinthians think that, when I told you that I was coming to see you, I did not mean it? He brings the greatest thought that He can find about God and God's truth, down to the settlement of this very little matter, the vindication of Himself from the charge, on the one hand, of facile and inconsiderate vacillation, and, on the other hand, of insincerity. So, we may say, the greatest thoughts should regulate the smallest acts. Though our maps be but a quarter of an inch to a hundred miles, let us see that they are drawn to scale. Let us see that He is our Pattern; and that the truthfulness, the simplicity, and faithfulness, which we rest upon as the very foundation of our intellectual as well as our moral and religious being, are, in our measure, copied in ourselves. As God is faithful, said Paul, our word to you was not yea! and nay! And they who are trusting to the God of the Amen! will live in all simplicity and godly sincerity; their yea will be yea, and their nay, nay.