

Jesus Juva

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CHRISTOLOGICAL TITLES
LESSON TWENTY-SIX

AMEN

“The Blue Notebook”

Tom Monaghan needed money if he was going to study architecture at the University of Michigan, and one day follow in the footsteps of his idol, Frank Lloyd Wright. Borrowing \$900 from his brother, Monaghan bought DomiNick’s pizza shop in nearby Ypsilanti, followed by the purchase of a second store in Mount Pleasant. In order to save “sign making” money, Monaghan simply dropped the “ick” from DomiNick and added an “o”. Thus began the second largest pizza franchise in the world, Domino’s Pizza.

The 53 year-old board chairman and founder at Domino’s Pizza grew up in poverty, spending many of his youngest years at a Catholic orphanage. Monaghan credits his deep religious faith to the influence of that institution. He began each work day with physical exercise, 20 minutes of prayer, and attendance at Mass. In the briefcase he carried every day to the office were two spiral notebooks. One notebook is red – like the devil – where he recorded his material desires in life. The other is blue – like heaven – where Monaghan wrote the spiritual aspects of his life. Since his personal worth was estimated at \$480 million, Monaghan wanted to guard himself against becoming materialistic. Tom Monaghan realized, “God has been good to me. I feel obliged to give something back.” A great philanthropist, Monaghan has often said “I’ve always felt the most important thing for me is getting into heaven. When I die, I don’t think St. Peter is going to ask me how many pizzas I sold.” Therefore, he has set for himself a goal before he retired: to build Roman Catholic chapels around the globe, especially in the Third World. Speaking,

years ago, to this one ambition, Monaghan related, “We have 5,000 pizza outlets. My goal now is 5,000 chapels.” In gratitude to God, Monaghan wished to build one chapel for each pizza shop he owns.

It would be wonderful if all of us had the foresight to carry a blue notebook, keeping a record of all our blessings. In our books we may not be able to record great financial wealth, but surely our spiritual wealth abounds. How often do we focus only upon the red notebook, lamenting what is not ours. Instead, let us rejoice in the bountiful blessings that we already possess. For each one of us the list will be different, but each one of us will have a list nonetheless. Shown should be our gratitude for family and friends, employment and recreation, health and home, democracy and freedom. Certainly an inventory of such prosperity would fill page after page after page. The blue notebook is in essence our “Amen” to a life blest by God.

The word “amen” was used by the church incorporated directly from the Jewish synagogue, with no alteration to its original meaning. In Hebrew the word “aman” means “to confirm,” “to establish,” “to support.” It expresses full agreement with, or acceptance of, that which has been said or laid down. Historical precedence for this is established when Ezra read the Law to the people of Israel, and as they listened they responded with “Amen.” As it is recorded, “Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. He read from it facing the square before the West gate from early morning until midday, and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, ‘Amen, Amen,’ lifting up their hands.” (Neh 8: 1-8) The response of the people could be transcribed as, “So let it be.” Paul adapted this in his letter to the Church of Rome. He wrote a solemn affirmation regarding the mission of Christ, ending it with the word “Amen.” (Rom 1:25)

Jesus often introduced an instruction with the word “amen,” emphasizing the truth about to be spoken. In the New Testament this has often been translated as “Truly, truly,” but in the Aramaic, the native tongue of Jesus, it is actually, “Amen, amen.” The English biblical passage, “Truly, truly, I say to you...” should read from the original manuscript, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (Jn 3:5) This emphatically bestows upon the listener that Jesus is

speaking a truth which cannot be challenged, the same as when Ezra read from the book of Law.

The first century apologists furthered the meaning of “amen” by applying it as a Christological title. The confession put forth noted Jesus as “the Amen,” that is, “the embodiment of truth.” The dictum now is Jesus both spoke the truth and is the truth.

This is demonstrated by John the Seer when he scribed, “And to the angel of the church of Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God’s creation.” (Rev 3:14) “Amen” refers to Jesus, in essence the one who is faithful and true.

This is reflective of Judaism which ascribed to God as “the Amen.” In the English Bible the words of Isaiah are translated, “Then whoever invokes a blessing in the land shall bless the God of faithfulness,” reads in the original Hebrew, “the God of Amen.” (Isa 65:16) Isaiah is establishing that God, as the “Amen,” is a Deity of truth and fidelity which is beyond skepticism. The instances cited in this essay in which the word ‘amen’ is supplemented by another does not highlight the failure of English biblical translations; instead, it accentuates the accommodation of language to adapt to specific cultures. “Faithfulness” is readily understood by any reader, whereas “Amen” would require a footnote of explanation.

The early church fathers affirmed the Christological title of “Amen” as it was bestowed upon Jesus. Primasius, who was the Bishop of Hadrumetum in North Africa from 550 to 560, asserted this in his Commentary of the Apocalypse. The reader should note that many interpretations are offered for the Book of Revelation, and it was the belief of Primasius that the book was a rendition of the history of the first century church. In his commentary on Revelation 3:14, Primasius wrote, “He who is the Amen says these words, the faithful and true witness. We must consider the meaning here of ‘is’ and ‘Amen.’ The term ‘amen’ is certainly said to mean ‘true’ or faithful.’ And so, in this passage without question it refers to that essence of the divinity of which God spoke...” The church firmly believed that Jesus spoke the truth and is truth incarnate.

The Moravian Community of Herrnhut in Saxony was well established by the year 1727. Unfortunately, dissension and bickering began to plague the commune. The leader of Herrnhut, Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, realized only a revival

would restore order among his followers. On May 12 the revival was held and a great spirit came upon the people. By the end of the summer the communicants wanted this magnificent blessing to continue, so on August 27 a prayer vigil began. On an August morning, 24 men and 24 women decided to spend one hour in prayer, with the time being scheduled so someone was praying every hour of the day. Soon others joined what became know as the “hourly intercession.” Amazingly, this discipline lasted for 100 years. Those who participated based their calling on this Old Testament text: “The sacred fire was never permitted to go out on the altar.” (Leviticus 6:13) Amen is inseparable from prayer; thud, a religious community, without falter, for a century affirmed their belief in Jesus, the Amen of life.

Let us make a similar confession in the steadfastness of our faith.

Soli Deo Gloria,

Ron Love