

Words of the Liturgy

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“Amen”

A very minor word, “Amen”, is so often repeated during our services and in our private prayers. Usually, it marks the end of prayers or important texts of religious content and it is like a seal placed on everything of particular importance. And that is exactly what it is. One of the earliest meanings of the ancient Hebrew word 'amen' was “to be worthy of trust”. Other meanings are 'it is verily so' & 'let it be so' & 'let it be accordingly'. In the Old Testament, in Deuteronomy, Moses instructs the people of Israel to build an altar, gives them the order of sacrificial offerings and commands them to obey God and submit to him: “This day thou art become the people of the Lord thy God”. In response to the loudly proclaimed words of the prophet, words which reject every impiety and every untruth, the people exclaim repeatedly “Amen.” - And the last lines of the last book of the New Testament, the Apocalypse or the Revelation of Saint John the Theologian read: “He which testifieth these things saith, Yea, I come quickly! Amen.

Thus the word “Amen” is used in the Old Testament to signify the concurrence with the pledge given and, by the same token, the acceptance of all consequences arising therefrom. Furthermore, in order to bear witness to this concurrence and at the same time praise the Lord, this word is repeated twice: “Amen, Amen.” In the New Testament this word is used even more frequently. In the Christian Church, the believers, even Greek speaking believers, started using this ancient Hebrew word at the end of each eucharistic prayer spoken by the priest....but even private prayers and hymns of praise of early as well as present day Christians end with this word. Christ used this word at the beginning of particularly important words of witness: “verily, verily I say unto you,” or 'amen, amen I say unto you.' He invested this word with a new, special meaning which had been unknown in the old rabbinical literature by using it to confirm the absolute truth and veracity of His words lending them the weight of His Divine authority. In the New Testament (in Slavonic) even Christ Himself is called “Amen”, the True One. As Apostle Paul says in his epistle to the Corinthians: “all promises of God are in Him (Christ), and Amen is in Him - to the glory of God and through us. “

And so, as we utter the word “Amen”, we give ourselves to God, we submit to His will. As He has signed the New Testament, His Testament with His Blood which He has shed upon the Cross so we receive from Him this New Testament, this new covenant of God with man and we confirm our faithfulness and devotion to Him by this burning word of faith -- Amen!