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Lesson 1. - Isaiah 42, 5-12

Lesson 2 - Mark 12. 28-34

Lesson 3 - Arcana Coelestia 3704 (6-7)

Our Lord is One Lord

“Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One.” - This Divine revelation is the essential part of our doctrine, and known in the Latin Word as the doctrine of the Lord. One might say that this doctrine is obvious to every religion. However, the idea of the oneness of the Lord has a different meaning in different religions and some people even believe in many gods. It is true that in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as in the Koran, the first proclamation of faith in one God is credited to Abraham. The formal allegiance to the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is common to Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. In the case when the French philosopher and scientist Pascal had his vision of God, he proclaimed him as “ The God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of philosophers and scholars,” which is to say, Pascal’s God is God of His own revelation, not an abstract deity of philosophers and scientists.

Our doctrine insists on Oneness of the Lord from the perspective of the Christian Trinitarian tradition. Because of this, our vision of the same God is not the same as it is to the Muslims and Jews, for to them, it was not revealed that there are three essentials in God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and that these essentials are vitally important for the understanding of the Lord, as well as our regeneration. Moreover, they are not a product of human speculation; they are the Lord’s Divine Revelation to us for the practical purposes of our life. Perhaps, there are other qualities, which are present in God and unknown to us, but they are not necessary for our salvation and creation of Heaven from the human race.

One of the reasons for the Lord’s second coming was the reestablishment of the correct understanding of the Lord’s Oneness. In the early Christian Church, there was this understanding. Later, especially after the council in Nicaea, the genuine meaning of the Lord’s teaching became obscure and it had been corrupted into a false doctrine about three Gods in union. Today many Christians of simple faith from the Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox denominations would probably feel insulted by our accusation that they worship three gods. They are sure that they believe in one God. However, they do not know what their churches are teaching today about the Lord.

Let us check their dogmatics. The Lutheran theologian, Jürgen Moltmann, is teaching that “the triune God is community, fellowship, and issues an invitation to his community and makes himself the model for a just and livable community in the world of nature and human beings.” According to his view it is “communion of the Holy Spirit” which “guarantees the unity of the church, and not monarchical centralism.”¹ The Roman Catholic theologian, Scheeben, also claimed that “the divine persons form this unique and exalted society, a society whose members are equal, related and bound together in the most perfect way and which is therefore the unattainable.

However, if God is one, how could there possibly be other gods? The explanation of how the false belief in multiple gods arose is found in Arcana Coelestia 3667:

”[I]n ancient times people distinguished the Supreme God (that is, the Lord) by various names, and this in accordance with His attributes, and in accordance with the goods which are from Him, and also in accordance with the truths, the multiplicity of which is a fact that is known to everyone. They who were of the Ancient Church by all these appellations understood only one God, namely, the Lord, whom they called Jehovah; but after the church had declined from good and truth, and at the same time from this wisdom, they began to worship as many gods as there were appellations of the one God; insomuch that every nation, and at last every family, acknowledged one of them for its own god; hence came the many gods of which mention is often made in the Word. The same thing took place in the family of Terah the father of Abraham, and also in the house of Abraham himself, who worshipped other gods, and especially the God Shaddai.”

Also, when ancient people worshiped other gods, they often worshiped not Good and Truth Himself, but the powers of nature, and even their own superstitions and evil inclinations. To worship the Lord was to those people a difficult job of a rigorous moral life with regular self-control and self-examination, while worshiping gods of their own desires, lusts and indulgences was to them an easy job, especially for people with inclination toward evil.

The saying “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me” means that there is only one moral standard, only one correct way of behavior, only one way to reach a blessed state of harmony, peace, and tranquility, which is an angelic state - the way which was revealed to humanity by the Lord Himself.

Our scientific understanding of the unity in the universe is also based on God’s Oneness, because the myriads of galaxies with all their variety of forms is nothing, but a reflection of the Divine oneness.

The Latin Word reveals that the whole Sacred Scripture teaches only about the Lord; for the Lord is the Word. He is called the Word because the Word signifies Divine Truth or Divine Wisdom; and the Lord is Divine Truth itself or Wisdom itself. Since Divine Wisdom and Divine Love make one, and in the Lord the Word had been one from eternity, there is no duality in Him, He is essentially one. This is why we are reading in the book “Doctrine of the Lord”, #22,

“The Lord sometimes calls Himself the Son, sometimes the Son of God, and sometimes the Son of man, depending in every case on the particular subject and context. Whenever the subject is His Divinity, His oneness with the Father, His Divine power, faith in Him, or life from Him, He then calls Himself the Son or Son of God, as in John 5:17-26 and elsewhere. But whenever the subject is His suffering, judgment, advent, and in general redemption, salvation, reformation and regeneration, then He calls Himself the Son of man, the reason being that He then means Himself in relation to the Word.

The Lord is referred to by many different names in the Word of the Old Testament. He is called in it Jehovah, Yah, Lord, God, the Lord Jehovah, Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel, the Holy One of Israel, the Mighty One of Jacob, Shaddai, and Rock, as well as Creator, Maker, Savior, and Redeemer, depending in every case on the

particular subject and context. Likewise in the Word of the New Testament, where He is called Jesus, Christ, Lord, God, the Son of God, the Son of man, a prophet, a lamb, and other names as well, depending again in every case on the particular subject and context.”

As we can see from that quotation, the difficulty with understanding of the Oneness of God is the difficulty to find the same Divine nature behind the variety of the Divine manifestations and the aspects of His activities. As we work towards a better understanding of the oneness of the Lord, and despite the apparently confusing variety of so many Divine names in the Bible that described the same God, we also learn the specific importance and power from these different names.

Like a beam of light which breaks in a prism into a rainbow of different colors, and nevertheless remains the same light, the one God always remains the same, but appears to people under different names in different circumstances. In the natural world we cannot see the first light of the spiritual sun, but can easily see its reflection in all things through the prism of creation. Our mind also works as a prism according to our limited capacity of understanding the Divine reality. This is why the names which describe the Lord in his different activities also help us to comprehend Him better; People easily lose their direction in the rarefied air of pure abstractions, but are very perceptive in concrete, historical situations, and in familial circumstances of ordinary life. This is why we believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, not in the God of philosophers and scholars. It is impossible for us to imitate God in His Divine, but it is necessary to imitate the Lord Jesus Christ as His Divine Human.

The proclamation to Israel that “the Lord our God, the Lord is One” has also its practical application for the process of our reformation and regeneration. It consists in imitation of our only Lord, Jesus Christ, and in understanding the integrity and wholeness of our doctrine through the regular and systematic studying of the Latin Word. We are starting our regeneration with repentance, or turning from the false gods of our desires, toward our one God. As we increasingly live only by His commandments, we are proceeding to be joined with Him and so enter into Heaven, where only one spiritual sun is shining as the singular source of Divine Love and Truth.

In a mystical sense the return to God is somehow a return to our true selves. The aloneness in us is seeking to return into the aloneness in God. The image is seeking to disappear into the original and to establish an absolute Oneness, but were this to occur, the creation, as a mirror of God, would cease to exist. God would then be alone, and God does not wish for this. This is why our life in the other world will be an infinite ascent toward perfection and absolute unity with the One,--a longing and eternal movement that has no final end towards oneness in the one and only Lord.

Amen

¹ Moltmann J. History and the Triune God. Contributions to Trinitarian Theology. Crossroad, New York, 1992 p. XII-XIII eternal and essential ideal of all society.”² Nor does Orthodox theology have any problems in understanding the unity of the triune God as “community.” That the Lord is one is already proclaimed in the Ten Commandments, where it is stated that “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.”

² Scheeben M.J. Handbuch der Katholischen Dogmatik I, Freiburg, 1873