

God is Love

By Bishop George Khodr

A discussion about the being of God is unthinkable of in Eastern Christianity since its heritage says that He is transcendent in His essence and beyond comprehension; comprehending Him implies getting to His essence and getting to His essence implies that you become He thus mixing the Creator with the creature and that is unacceptable. Still you have to connect with Him since without this relation there is no Lordship; for without this relationship, whose Lord would the Lord be?

Before Man got to monotheism, Plato made god to be the “Form of Forms” (Form of the Good) attributing a form in “heaven” for every existing object, and God would be the crown of all these forms. But for his student Aristotle, God is the Cause of Causes or the “unmoved mover”. Judaic monotheism takes us to a different realm expressed in the Exodus 13: 3, “I am going to the people of Israel to tell them that the God of your fathers has sent me to you, and if they ask me about his name what shall I tell them? God told Moses: “I am Yahweh”. And in the original Hebrew, “I Am”. And I go back to the original Hebrew because the name Yahweh is a verb in the present tense and not a noun, meaning “I Am Who I Am”, or “I Am Whom I Will Be”; that is He introduces himself through His existence among His people. That is not a definition of the Divine Being but of the Divine action. In that sense God told Abraham, “I make a covenant with you; I will be your God.” Genesis 17: 17. Those are not words about the Being of God that is self-existent but about God’s accompaniment to Abraham in the context of the covenant “I will be their God and they will be my people”. (Jeremiah 7: 23). The same is found in Ezekiel, Luke, and the Acts; what is implied in Jeremiah is that “my being your God” means that I will turn to you today and tomorrow (meaning always), and if you know me as your God, you will be mine in the sense that: “as I “move” towards you in my care, kindness and tenderness, you will be “moving” towards me in obedience. Without a compassionate God, you are merely a social group of people like any other group, and you have no being except in my mercy. The term “People of God”, the object of the preposition is “God” indicating that God is known through His relationship with the people and not in His essence. This nuance of meaning is repeated in phrases like “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” or “the God of Israel” or “the Lord of Hosts” or “the God of our Fathers”.

In the dealing of God with His people, His attributes are understood – that He is righteous, just, able, a shepherd, a bridegroom, a father, a mother. All what God does is a relationship. Even the attribute of “creator-ship” is relational; Genesis starts with “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”. Perhaps of the most eloquent of what has been said of God is that He is “the Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1: 3 and 2Corinthians 1: 3). The aforementioned characterization of God is also relational.

In this article’s title, we face for the first time, what we might consider at first glance a description of God in the phrase: “God is Love”. That came in 1 John 4:8; after he says “for love is from God”, he says “God is love”.

My conjecture is that “love” as it is here, is not one of the qualities of God; it is His name. It is Himself. It gives content (or meaning) to God’s word and expresses His movement in Christ and in His holiness.

Love is the “Origin” that is in the Father from which (love) came the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father is the Eternal Being who with the Son and the Holy Spirit are in oneness, that of love. And that oneness is the depth of the Lord and not a number that follows the arithmetic of our world. Love is this relational oneness (literally, the oneness that moves) that gives life to humans. And God has tied himself to Man since the time of creation. Humans exist in Him if they love Him and if they love one another. So when they dwell in love, they would be walking in God; and what they need is only that love would dwell in them and that they dwell in it finding peace in it, as such the chasm between Heaven and Earth is abolished.

And because Love is perfect, God eliminates the false gods created by the human desires and passions. And it is idolatry when you consider your desires as the source of life; as such your desires become hostile idols that “kill” you, thus proclaiming with Nietzsche “God is dead” while in fact He is the One who really is and exists and in Whom the existence has life.

But God’s life that is renewed in you requires that you fight the false gods that you have accepted to make you, while they plant spiritual death in you because they snatch you from Love.

It is this Love, which when you really “taste” (experience), makes you become God’s companion. We are His companions through His word which He speaks into us; thus we become His word and it becomes us. So in our companionship with God, we become one spirit with Him as St. Paul says, and we would desire nothing except His “face” (i.e. His presence) which when we long for, His Lights will show on us.

If you understand that, you would do away with the false qualities that the world has attributed to God concerning the nature of His dealing with His people and you would start understanding the love that comes down on you from above and you would dismiss away from God all what is really not He and of Him. You will not remain captive to popular ideas (in the world around you) that can produce spiritual death in you. You would not view God as one who punishes you like a policeman does, or one who sends you illness or one who takes you life in a car accident.

You die because of fear. And fear makes God an enemy of life. Life, in its spiritual and physical aspects is a gift from God, not only in Him creating us but in the permanence of His love for us generation after generation.

To this, the Lord is not what Man pictures Him to be. It is He who “pictures” (forms) man. Therefore it is wrong to project on to God bad human qualities, like wanting someone to die. I know some people who attribute to Him the planning of a certain harm that befell someone. God does not harm anyone, and He does not get a germ into a human being. All what comes from Him is goodness and truth and charity.

The Lord is pure, and you need to purify your mind from all what can harm you in your coming to Him or else you would not enjoy the love that comes down on you from Him.

All that is other than love is the kingdom of sin. And “the wages of sin is death”. Drive away death from you through love so that you become a son of the light; only love does throw you into the light.

Decide truly that you would not do anything that would put the Love in you and in the others to shame. That is Light in all its fullness; aside from that do not think about a fatigue that might come your way or a temptation that seduces you because Love cleanses all the harm that comes forth from the corruption that surrounds you and from those who are corrupt.

Love even those corrupt ones and forgive them for if they taste through you the Divine Love given them, they will discover something they have never dreamt of before. In Love, there is the possibility for a new humanity, the people of which come down among us from Heaven.