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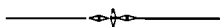
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Looking back on it all, we can say, "The Lord hath done great things, whereof we are glad." Many, if not all of us, felt that the work was really only beginning where we left off. We would fain have remained longer amidst what God was so owning and so signally blessing: we would fain have remained longer amongst those whose gratitude and affectionate bearing can never be forgotten. One sorrows to think that three thousand miles lie between ourselves and many dear "children" in New York. We live in the hope we may look into their faces again: we pray that if not here, yet there, where there "shall be no more sea," we may meet and rejoice with a common joy. Meanwhile, we thank our God for the wonders He has wrought. We believe that one more link is added to the chain which binds two great peoples of the same tongue together; and we rejoice to believe that the verdict on the first Mission in New York, in which some of the clergy of the Church of England were privileged to take a part, by those who remain there, and can calmly and dispassionately review it when its more exciting circumstances are withdrawn, is simply and soberly this: "The memory of your visit will long live in our hearts as a gracious epoch in the history of our Church life."

FRANCIS PIGOU, D.D.



ART. III.—THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA.

WHAT MAY WE SUPPOSE THAT OUR LORD INTENDED BY SAYING OF HIMSELF, *ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ Α καὶ τὸ Ω* ?

THE words *ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ Α καὶ τὸ Ω*, occur three times for certain in the Apocalypse (i. 8, xxi. 6, xxii. 13). In the last of the three passages the context shows that they are our Lord's utterances concerning Himself. "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to render to every man as his work shall be. I AM THE Α AND THE Ω, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

In the second passage (chap. xxi. 6) the words come to St. John directly from Him that sat upon the throne. If St. John saw the Speaker, again we say that it must have been our Lord, for "No man hath seen God at any time." The only-begotten Son is ever His visible exponent. In chap. i. 8, the saying is given by the sacred writer with this authority, "I am the Α and the Ω, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." Whether this sentence, or the threefold repetition of the saying in the Apocalypse

was intended to direct our thoughts to the three Persons of the Holy One (blessed be His Name!), I will not stay to inquire, but only observe that in the first and second of the three passages (in Rev. i. and xxi.), the words are clearly the utterance of Deity; while in the last they belong also to Him Who hath "authority to execute judgment, *because He is the Son of Man.*"

To the God-Man, therefore, we must look for the full meaning and purport of the words before us; not to our Lord in Deity apart from humanity, far less to His manhood apart from Deity. They are a part of the glory of "*the Word*" Who "was made flesh;" glory of the only-begotten of the Father, wherewith He manifested His Father's name.

These words, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," must surely have some *distinct* meaning of their own. It would be waste of time to demonstrate that they are not merely another way of saying (what our Lord has said both elsewhere and in the immediate context) that He is also the "beginning" and the "end," "the first" and "the last." For these other clauses are by no means the same saying with the one under consideration, though they are in perfect harmony with it. "Alpha" and "Omega" are *letters, and nothing else*. They have each their own place in language, places which cannot be filled by any vocal substitute whatever. If our Lord has undertaken to be Himself the Alpha and the Omega, surely His words must have some definite meaning. Surely He must have known distinctly what He was about to do.

What then are "the Alpha" and "the Omega"? They are, and, so far as I am aware, they always have been the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, the alphabet of that language in which the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was first given to men. Between Alpha and Omega are comprised all the letters of that Gentile tongue which was chosen in the Divine counsels to be the vehicle of the everlasting Gospel to "all nations." It was not the first Gentile tongue in which the oracles of God were expressed—that was the Chaldee;—but possibly the first Gentile tongue in which Holy Scripture was written down.¹ And the Alpha and Omega are *vowels, not consonants*.

If our Lord had been pleased to express the saying which is

¹ The original Scriptures of the Old Testament were written in Hebrew, *without vowels*; the Chaldee paraphrases used in the synagogues were at first extemporised translations. The date when these were first *written* is matter of dispute. Modern critical opinion seems to incline to the view that the Septuagint is older than the present written and printed Targums. The exact date of the first *written* Targum I cannot pretend to give.

before us in the holy language which He spoke on Sinai (the ancient Hebrew), He would, we are told, have used one vowel and one consonant, the Aleph and the Tau of the Hebrew alphabet. "From Aleph to Tau" is a phrase in use among the Rabbins. But our Lord did not choose to express this thought of His in the language of the Old Testament. Nor did He select that other language of the same family which He spoke familiarly on earth, and in which He called the great Apostle of the Gentiles by a voice from heaven. He chose rather to be "the Alpha and the Omega" of His Word in the chief ancient tongue of the Gentiles; the vehicle that in those days travelled farthest and carried the most of human thought, in which, moreover, those ideas of government were first formulated, which have the widest currency and the most prevailing influence throughout the kingdoms of the heaving world around us even to the present day.

If our Lord had been pleased to express His thought in the Hebrew language, it seems that He must have spoken, not of Alpha and Omega, but of Aleph and Tau. I said before that He would in that case have made use of one vowel and one consonant; but that statement must be slightly modified in order to perfect accuracy. Alpha is a vowel in Greek, and Aleph is practically a vowel in Hebrew; but it is an undecided vowel. In printed Hebrew it needs to be supplemented by some distinguishing mark or point, in order to tell us what vowel it shall be. It may be any one of our five vowel sounds, longer or shorter, according to the usage of the Hebrew tongue. And as it is with Hebrew, so it is with Chaldee. But the Greek Alpha is subject to no such uncertainty. It is a vowel, and a distinct vowel, and it is one vowel only; the first of the scale. In the same scale of vowels Omega is the last. The sound of Alpha comes forth with the first opening of the lips in a horizontal line; the sound of Omega is the fullest vocal utterance that you can make *ore rotundo*. Between these two are included all other vocal modifications which give distinctness to what is written, and make what is spoken intelligible by the human ear. Without a vowel the *consonant* cannot sound.

In view of this fact, can we regard it as a thing indifferent that the language of the Old Testament at the time of our Lord's coming had no written vowels at all? Some slight attempt there was, but very precarious, to supply this want by means of four letters—Aleph, Vau, Yod, and He—three of which have also the power of consonants, while Aleph itself can be any vowel you please from *a* to *o*; but distinct vowel system there was none. The present system (as we know) must be dated within the Christian era. Manuscripts even now

in existence exhibit two distinct systems of Hebrew vowel-pointing. But no known MS. of the Hebrew Scriptures is as old as the older extant Uncial MSS. of the Greek Testament.

How, then, were the Scriptures of the Old Testament read in our Lord's time? One cannot pronounce a string of consonants without vowels, let men abbreviate written words as they will. THS SNTNC CNNT B RD S T HS BN WRITN, THGH N VRY GRT NTLLGNC S RQRD T MK T CLR. The old Hebrew Scriptures without vowels, in the time of our Lord, were read as any one must read a common edition of the Talmud now, with such vowels as tradition supplies. Men learn to read the Talmud by oral teaching. Only by strong memory and long practice does it become possible to read with fluency at all. In those days, to be sure, Chaldee was still a living language; and there is sufficient resemblance between Biblical Hebrew and Chaldee to enable a person familiar with the one tongue to put some vowels to a sentence of the other, if he had the consonants before his eyes. Whether these would be the vowels properly belonging to the spoken Hebrew might be open to doubt. Is it quite certain that the Massoretic vowel-pointing of the Old Testament, which has now been accepted for centuries, has reproduced the sound of David's language faithfully to our ears? The system may be grammatical, faithful and consistent throughout; but he would be a bold man who would venture to assert that it has preserved the original vowel sounds. The preceding remarks may help us to realize the facts of the case.

But I must not wander off the track. When our Lord came—when, as St. John describes it, "THE WORD was made flesh, and dwelt among us," the original Scriptures were shut up in a book of consonants, written in a dead language. The nation to whom the sacred oracles were committed had been in captivity, and had there returned to the Chaldaean language of their father Abraham, or at least of that part of his family which removed to Haran, and never sojourned in Canaan at all.¹ Thus the chosen people in Palestine, from the time of the Babylonish captivity, used familiarly a Gentile tongue—the tongue of Nebuchadnezzar, the head of that part of mankind whose metropolis is Babylon, not the city of God.² But, while speaking Chaldee, they still spoke a Semitic language, and one not well fitted for the purposes of general intercourse among mankind. To that position the Greek language had already made good its claim. Was it not called in Scripture the language of Javan, the son of Japhet? And had not Noah prophesied that God should "enlarge," or (if you will)

¹ See Gen. xxxi. 47.

² See Dan. ii.

"persuade Japhet," and he should "dwell in the tents of Shem"? Both the "persuasion" and "enlargement" in question were to come partly through the language of that branch of Japhet's family which owned Javan for its progenitor, and which is described in the Old Testament by Javan's name. It was in the Greek tongue—the tongue of Javan—that the Gospel was most widely and successfully preached. The only book of the New Testament which has even the shadow of a claim to a Chaldæan original is the Gospel according to St. Matthew. And if by any chance the question, in what language that Gospel might best appear, had been submitted beforehand to the members of the Christian community, even so early as the evening of the Day of Pentecost (not to say, after Cornelius had heard St. Peter), and the Christians of the day had been invited to record their preference by vote for a Chaldæan or a Greek Gospel, there cannot be a moment's doubt on which side the majority would have been found. May not one suppose that common-sense counted for something (with all respect to the authority of the Fathers) even then?

The publication of the Scriptures in the Greek tongue was a much more decided step in the direction of Gentile currency, and away from the isolation of the Jew, than the use of Chaldee paraphrases could ever be. The Babylonish captivity caused the Targum, or Chaldee paraphrase, to be heard in the synagogue after the Hebrew. Thus the Gentile portion of the family of Terah (represented by Laban in early days) was promoted to a level with Israel in relation to the Word of Life. The same Targum language was spoken by our Lord habitually in His earthly home. It was the tongue of Laban, not of Jacob; and the tongue of the *mothers*, not the *fathers*, of the chosen race.¹ From the same language our Lord took the names which He bestowed familiarly upon His three leading disciples, as Boanerges and Kephaz. In that language He called to the little sleeper, "*Talitha kumi*"—"Wake up, little one;" although to Hebrew ears it might suggest rather, "Little lamb, arise." In the same tongue He expressed His anguish in Gethsemane, "*Abba, Father*;" and His deeper loneliness on the cross. For if we look for the expression "*Lama sabachthani*" in Old Testament Scripture, we find it not entirely in the Hebrew of Ps. xxii. 1, nor in the Chaldee paraphrase of that verse; but in the Targum of Ps. xliii. 2, "Why hast Thou put Me from Thee?"—"Why dost Thou cast Me off?"

In the same tongue, once more, He spake from heaven,

¹ Rebekah, and Leah, and Rachel all spoke the Chaldæan language in their maiden life.

"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" But I venture to surmise, with all reverence, that it was not in Chaldee that He communicated the Revelation to St. John. I suspect that when He said, *Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ Ἀλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ μέγα*, He used those very identical words. It is an interesting thought, however, and I may be pardoned for spending upon it one more sentence, that the native tongue of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on earth should have thus occupied the middle ground between the decidedly Jewish tongue of Old Testament Scripture and the decidedly Gentile tongue of the New Testament. I do not here touch the question, to me a somewhat uncongenial one, whether He *ever* spoke Greek or not. I see no reason to doubt that all Galilæans who did business with foreign residents were sufficiently possessed of the resources of civilization, to buy and sell in that language which was the common medium of exchange. But if I am told that He preached in Greek to the peasants on the hills of Galilee, or read Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth in that tongue, or talked Greek with Peter and James and John and Andrew when they sat on Olivet, I say, *Μὴ γένοιτο!* Kephas, Boanerges, Talitha cumi, Ephphatha, Abba, Lama sabachthani forbid the thought. That He *knew Greek* (Who made them that made it), and could speak and understand it if need were, who doubts? But surely, it cannot have been His native tongue. Afterwards, however, when He said, *Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ Ἀ καὶ τὸ Ω*, "the Sun was risen upon the earth." "The sound had gone out into all lands, and the words unto the end of the world." In that sound and in those words He had set a tabernacle for the Sun—the Sun of righteousness. Upon the wheels of that language in the fourfold Gospel He "rejoiceth as a giant to run His course." *It is of this Gospel, in this tongue, that the Word made flesh is the Α and Ω, the first and last vocalizer, and the distinguisher of every sound that goes between.* The ancient Scriptures were but as the six water-pots of stone, far from full, though certainly not empty, until He came and gave the commandment to fill them with living water; "and they filled them up to the brim." "They are they which testify of Me," He said. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," is the witness of His angel. And is it strange that He, of Whom the spirit of prophecy can only witness, should claim to give letters to the prophecy itself? What can be more appropriate than that the kind of letters (*the vowels, namely*) which were wanting to the Word of Scripture before He came, should be seen to have been waiting for His utterance? May we not add them to the things which Jewish tradition has marked as lacking in the second Temple, and present the matter somewhat thus?

As in the second Temple there were no tables of the Covenant, because the New Covenant itself was to be there revealed; no ark of the Covenant, because the body of Him Who came to do God's will was to be seen there; no mercy-seat, because God was about to set forth His Son to be a covering of the law (*ἱλαστήριον*) through faith in His blood; and thus the most Holy Place was empty, because it waited for the Everlasting Priest; as there was no outward manifestation of the visible *Shekinah*, because Christ Himself and the Holy Spirit were to come in the days of that Temple to dwell among men—so also the letter of the sacred oracles was permitted to lose that living interpretation of the prophets which was supplied by the daily use of the Hebrew language, in order that it might be left the more free for Him, Who was to be the Alpha and the Omega, to fill it with His own fulness and to make all of it vocal with His praise.

But at the time of our Lord's appearing was there not already some attempt made to put Alpha and Omega to the Scriptures of the Old Covenant, by translating them into the Greek tongue?

Unquestionably there was. And the mere mention of the fact calls up a host of interesting inquiries regarding the divergences of that ancient version from what has been delivered to us through Jewish hands (yes, and *unchristian hands*) as the proper reading of the original Hebrew. Is it possible that we ought to accept the version to which *Alpha and Omega properly belong* as more true to the Christian sense than the unchristian and traditional Hebrew? or, in plain words, Shall we give preference to the LXX. above the Massoretic text?

Is it altogether an idle suggestion that some such question may possibly have suggested itself, at least in part, to the mind of the beloved disciple, who to all intents has closed the Canon of both Testaments, from whose successors the Church has received nothing which can claim a place in "the Scripture of truth?"

If there were any such question in his mind, or can be in ours, is it not in fact answered by this saying of our Lord's, "I AM the Alpha and the Omega?" I MYSELF! not the Greek Testament; not the Septuagint Version; far less the consensus of the Fathers. Not one of all these, nor all together; but I Myself.

One can hardly avoid the thought that there must have been grave questions in the mind of those who knew the value of Scripture, when the guardians of the Old Testament and the custodians of the New Covenant had finally parted company until the end of the world; when Israel had revolted

from Christ Jesus, and taken away the Hebrew Scriptures to be henceforward, if possible, the stronghold of error, refusing all aid in the use of that store of knowledge to the Christian Church. What schism of the East and West, what "Protestant Revolution"¹ had such momentous effects in the apparent rending of Holy Scripture, as this first great schism of all? Did St. Paul never feel any inconvenience arising from the antagonism between the wisest of the Hebrews and the disciples of that Alpha and Omega which they refused? And if St. Paul may have felt it a little, must not St. John have felt it much? For though he had far less of human learning, he was no whit less zealous for the truth and honour of his Lord. In this light again, what comfort was there in the saying that the voice of Holy Scripture to the multitude of nations should ever be the Voice of Christ! The voice that once "shook the earth," that will yet shake earth and heaven, has pledged itself three times over in the Apocalypse, that the Word of God shall not lack sound and sense for evermore. "FOR I AM THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA, saith the Lord, which was, and which is, and which is to come, the Almighty!"

Have we not felt that some such pledge as this has been kept throughout the ages by Him Who walks in the midst of all the Churches, whether the Church herself has been mindful of the pledge or not? What book has been so absolutely abandoned (if we may so say), as the Bible, to the free handling of mankind? Copied, altered, translated, corrected, proscribed, re-published, revised, expounded by the learned, profaned by the ignorant, bandied about in argument, perverted to every use and abuse of controversy;—the Word of the Lord is tried in the fire (*δοκιμιον τῇ γῇ*—Ps. xii. 6, Sept.—a test for all the earth), and with this result only, that it "is purified seven times." *How is it?* Let "the Alpha and Omega" Himself explain. It is His doing, that, let men say what they will, their best or their worst, the Scripture will not and cannot say anything but what He utters, in such a tone that men in general shall hear it and believe. All the Revision Companies in the world will not prevail to establish anything by Revision which is not part of the Alpha and Omega of the Lord. We may take our side as we please. We are not the authorities in the matter, but "I AM!" *Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ Ἀ καὶ τὸ Ὠ*. And we may be very sure that the English Bible, with its curious affinities to the old Semitic tongue of the Old Testament² on the one side, and its thoroughly Ja-

¹ The new Anglican term for "the Reformation," properly so called.

² It is very curious how the English language, which in itself has little more of case or person endings than Hebrew, can be accommodated to

phetic character on the other, has not been made practically *A* and *Ω* for so many millions of people without His will. Not only is He the *A* and the *Ω*, but with Him is "the Yea" to consent to what is proposed, and the "Amen" to all that is done. And,—reverting for one moment to that question about the LXX., only half asked and not half answered just now,—it would seem clear that our acceptance of it, as an authority, must be limited to those places where the seal of the New Testament has been set upon the version which it gives. Outside these passages we do not really know for certain what is the LXX. A recent review¹ has reminded us that the common text is confronted by another, which differs from it to the most alarming extent. There are no certain *A* and *Ω* to be heard there. We may suspect, and surmise, and suggest. But the opposite suggestions are as good as ours, until One has spoken Whose authority is decisive. And that decision remains unspoken still.

But if we may look outside the mere letter of the saying which is before us, and say generally that "the Alpha and the Omega of the written Word" is the living Word Himself, we come to a region where all can follow, and all may contribute to the exegesis of the text. Be {the language what it may, is not that interpretation of Holy Scripture truly *vocal* which Christ has spoken with reference to Himself? I do not refer to any forced applications of Scripture wherewith men have bound it for a time to something or other which apparently concerns the Kingdom of Christ. But how many places of the Old Testament were dumb for all practical purposes, until our Lord or His Spirit gave them an intelligible voice!

Take one instance to show how His Alpha and Omega have

express the syntactical and antithetical niceties of the most elaborate languages of ancient and modern times. For proof of its Semitic affinity, let anyone who knows the elements of Hebrew take a common English verb, say the verb *to love*, and, discarding all auxiliary words, count up the variations of which the word itself is capable: *love*, *lovest*, *loved*, *lovedst*, *love* (imperative), *loving* (active participle), *loving* (gerund or verbal noun), *loved* (passive participle); and compare a Hebrew Kal form. Or take our simple plural, and our personal pronouns, and compare them in the same way. In simple grammatical forms, the Hebrew is rather more copious than English; and yet English has held its own, and has proved sufficiently receptive of the niceties of all the languages of the civilized world.

¹ The *Quarterly* for last October, on the Revised Old Testament, calls attention to the fact that the Vatican MS. of the LXX. is very generally quoted as if it were the *Septuagint* itself. It is no more the *Septuagint* than the Alexandrian MS. This MS. B, if it were our sole authority, would mutilate the story of David nearly as badly as it does the story of David's Son. Yet it passes for the *Septuagint*, because it is the *common printed text*. Its right to hold this position remains to be proved.

prevailed. In Isaiah xxv. 8 there are three words written, which the traditional Hebrew reads thus, בָּלַע הַמָּוֶת לְנֶצַח, *Billagh Hammaveth Lanetzach*. Our A.V. renders thus, "He will swallow up death in victory"—more precisely the Revisers, "He hath swallowed up death for ever." Both alike take their vowels from the Jew, who does not accept the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as an historical fact.

Let me invite attention to the history of this rendering, as an example of the way in which our Lord by the Holy Spirit has vocalized a single text. The words were undoubtedly *read* as we read them before Christ came. Taken in order they literally mean this :

Billagh,	Hammaveth,	Lanetzach,
Hath swallowed up	Death	Unto victory, or, for ever.

Such a sentence is of course ambiguous. It leaves you doubtful whether "death hath swallowed up," or "some one hath swallowed up death." The word "death" may be either the subject or object of the verb. The oldest translation which we possess gave death the victory. This was the version of the LXX. : κατέπιεν ὁ Θάνατος ἰσχύσας, or κατισχύσας—"Death swallowed up and was strong," or "did prevail." The next translation that we find is St. Paul's: "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, that is, 'in the resurrection of the just at the last trump,' then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written:" κατεπύθη ὁ Θάνατος εἰς νίκης, "Death *is* swallowed up in victory." This rendering is unmistakable. But it is not the translation of the Hebrew as read by the LXX., or as printed by the Jews. The word *Billagh* cannot mean *is swallowed up*. But alter just one vowel, and instead of *Billagh* read *Bullagh*; in other words, instead of the vowels Iota and Alpha, read *Ω* and *Α*, and you have St. Paul's version at once. Delitzsch actually puts it into Hebrew in his New Testament in that way. In this case the New Testament reading is obtained, literally, by the sound of *a* and *ω*. But the truth itself rests not on mere vowels, but on accomplished facts. The victory over death was gained by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. When that victory has been *given* to us through Him, then we shall see the words accomplished as they were rendered by St. Paul.

It is not a little curious that since the time of St. Paul, all Israel has followed his interpretation, *not* that of the LXX., which was their own. They still read the first of those three words *Billagh*. But they make death the object, not the subject of the verb, and so the Targum renders the passage, "Death shall be *forgotten* for ever;" and the later Jewish com-

mentators with one accord expound the Hebrew in that sense. The Talmud in two places refers us for explanation to Isaiah lxv. 20. Of course one cannot be certain that the Rabbins stole the interpretation from St. Paul. The fact is, that the only *written* translation of Isaiah xxv. 8 which can be dated B.C. gives death the victory. The New Testament takes the victory away from death, and gives it to his conqueror, and every later Jewish version or commentary that I have seen follows in the same track. But the α and ω here are in fact due to one Person and to one only; the real A and Ω is our Risen Lord. Another aspect of this particular verse once presented itself to me, which I cannot help noting. It shows how God's Word *will* speak the truth everywhere. I happened to look up the passage in St. Paul in a Hebrew New Testament issued by Bagster. There, instead of St. Paul's "Death is swallowed up," we are presented with the quotation from Isaiah in its traditional form: "Hath swallowed up death unto victory." Reading this sentence with the surroundings of 1 Cor. xv., it suddenly struck me in a new light. Why not take it thus—"Death hath swallowed up his last"? Or, to put it in the words of the Psalm, "O thou enemy, destructions are come to a *perpetual end*." So, take the sentence which way you will, it bears that meaning which the A and Ω first put upon it. Whether we read it "He hath swallowed up death," or, "Death hath swallowed up," *i.e.*, hath devoured and made an end of devouring, for ever—either way it comes to the same thing, that "Death is swallowed up in victory." "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath *overcome*," "He hath prevailed to open the book," sealed to all before His coming, and has put His own A and Ω thereto. In so doing He hath won the victory.

This expression suggests to my mind another, which I believe may be used as an illustration of the subject in hand. Every student of the Psalms in their titles knows how many of them, more especially of those ascribed to David, have the heading in our Bibles, "To the Chief Musician," Lam'natsêach, or, as it is sometimes rendered, "To the Precentor." The LXX. translation B.C. could make nothing out of this. They rendered it *εἰς τὸ τέλος* (*i.e.*, for, or unto, the end). I do not think they merely confused it with the similar expression Lanêtzach, because I observe they generally render that by *εἰς τέλος*, and Lam'natzêach, by *εἰς τὸ τέλος*. Whether this points to any such reading as Lehannetzach, or whether M'natzêach was supposed to be an abstract substantive like *Maschil*, or what their theory of the word was, I do not stay to discuss. That is not the point. Nor do I make any doubt that the word in Hebrew means the "chief musician." But directly the

Hebrews began to speak Chaldee, the word M'natzeach became capable of suggesting a fresh thought. In Chaldee it means a conqueror. I have seen it used in Rabbi David Kimchi as a title of Messiah. And when we come to the Book of Revelation, and read again and again in the promises of our Lord and Saviour, τῷ νικῶντι, "To him that overcometh" will I give thus and thus, "even as I also overcame;" and again, "Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah overcame, to open the book;" it is hardly possible not to be struck with the coincidence between this epithet of Christ's faithful soldiers and servants in the Church militant, and the person to whom the Psalms are addressed. *Victori* was Jerome's rendering of Lam'natzêäch there. Suppose also that you happen to be daily studying the Psalter with a view to elicit its application, and are daily feeling the pressure of your own conflict and the sympathy of the Psalmist and the Psalm. Under such circumstances it becomes almost impossible to avoid the conclusion that while the experience of conflict is common to many, and many need the victory which Christ gives, the perfect conqueror is only one. And herein lies the beauty of the imperfect participle, "to him that is overcoming," τῷ νικῶντι, as contrasted with the complete action denoted by ἐνίκησα, "I overcame." The perfect victory belongs to our Lord alone; but it is given to us in its effect daily, and while we gird ourselves to the battle and follow Him, we are permitted also to "put our feet upon the necks" of those enemies whom He Himself has bruised beneath our feet. "To him that is overcoming" the Psalmist speaks words of sympathy and encouragement, but the sole honour and glory of the victory belong to Him that once for all overcame. Thus does the Alpha and Omega Himself make the Old Testament to utter His praise. I have said quite enough to indicate in which direction the meaning of the words before us appears to me to lie, and I leave the suggestion for others to follow out. The whole subject of our Lord's relation to Scripture is full of interest. It seems to me the very foundation of all certainty as to what Scripture is in itself, and was meant to be to us. Modern investigation seems to limit itself too much to the outside of Scripture, if I may so say; to the consonants rather than the vowels of the sacred text; to the shape of the vessel rather than the fulness of its contents.¹ Yet even when we have realized the standpoint of

¹ "Whatever simply puts us on a level with ordinary hearers of ancient days, does no more than inform us what custom, locality, or date is intended by the sacred writer (things which once were obvious, and which ought not to be any difficulty now); all this, I say, seems *external* to the province of Interpretation, the purpose of which is to discover the method and the meaning of Holy Writ." So wrote Dean Burgon in

the human writer so exactly, if that be possible, as to be able to put ourselves into his place, we are yet only at the beginning of exegesis. We have still to ask the question, what the Divine voice had to say through this human testimony in relation to our Lord and His kingdom that was to come. His Alpha and Omega, or rather He Himself, as the Alpha and the Omega, can alone furnish the reply. To Himself or to the Spirit, Who is His representative amongst us, we must look for this. I will only add one thought in conclusion, which springs naturally out of the context of Rev. xxii. 13. "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am the Alpha and Omega." Is He Himself the Alpha and Omega of all that we speak or write in His Name? "He that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh His glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him." "To him that worketh righteousness shall be a sure reward."

C. H. WALLER.



ART. IV.—THE PARISH CHURCHES BILL.

THE agitation about Church Reform is already passing out of the stage of discussion into that of action, as it is quite right and time it should. Foremost of these enterprises of reform—so far, at least, as the present Parliament is concerned—is the "Parish Churches Bill," introduced into the House of Lords by the Bishop of Peterborough, and read a first time on January 21st. It is a Bill of no great length, since it contains altogether only seven enacting clauses, and two of those are formal only; but its importance must not be measured by its length. Its title describes it as "An Act to declare and enact the Law as to the Rights of Parishioners in their Parish Churches;" and its preamble recites that "whereas according to the common law of this realm, every parish church in England and Wales is for the free use, in common, of all

"Inspiration and Interpretation," p. 141 (published in 1861, twenty-five years ago). But surely modern exegesis still concerns itself far more with the literal sense which Scripture had to the ears of its first hearers, than with the discovery of its meaning in relation to Christ. The position of Joseph or Moses among the Egyptian dynasties, is far more interesting to most readers than the relation of either of them to Christ. Yet He alone is the Alpha and Omega of either story. The Scripture narrative will make no real history (any more than consonants without vowels can be read intelligibly) apart from Him.