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The Alpha and The Omega

by T. Austin-Sparks

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"I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8).

"And He said unto me... I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End" (Rev. 21:6).

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End" (Rev. 22:13).

One of the titles which the Lord takes to Himself in resurrection is: "the Alpha and the Omega". The Lord Jesus here presents Himself as "the Living One", Who was dead, and is alive again - alive for evermore (Rev. 1:18). Those two letters, Alpha and Omega, are, as we know, the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. The one is the same in form as the first letter in our own alphabet; the other is unlike any of our letters. Alpha and Omega - First and Last. In every alphabet there is something which corresponds to an 'A' and a 'Z', an Alpha and an Omega, a beginning and an end. It does not matter how complicated the alphabet may be, or if it only contains a poor twenty-six letters as in English: everything is bounded by the 'A' and the 'Z', the Alpha and the Omega. You cannot get anything outside of that; all is within that. The Alpha and the Omega comprehend all speech; there is no speech possible in any language outside of what comes between those two letters. All that can be said has to come between their compass; outside of their compass nothing can be said.

No Knowledge Of God Outside Of Christ

Now Jesus says that of Himself: "*I am* the Alpha and the Omega." The Word of God tells us that Christ is the fullness of God, and that God will sum up all things in Him. What is more, it shows us that God will never speak to anybody outside of His Son, Jesus Christ. He has bounded all His speech to man by His Son; He has made Christ the compass of all; He has nothing to say, and He will say nothing, outside of His Son. "No one cometh unto the Father, but by Me," said the Son (John 14:6). "And no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him" (Matt. 11:27). The Apostle who wrote the Letter to the Hebrews began by saying: 'In old times, God spoke in fragments and in parts and in various manners, by different men and at different times; but at the last He summed up all that He had to say in His Son. In the end, He has spoken to us in His Son, Whom He has appointed Heir of all things.' All that God will say, and all that God can say, to us, will be in Jesus Christ.

"I am the Alpha". The very first syllable of the knowledge of God is the knowledge of Jesus Christ. It begins with A; it is the first lisp of a babe. "God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). The first syllable of the Christian life begins with 'A' - 'Father'. We do not know the Father until we know Jesus Christ: He it is Who has revealed the Father. The beginning of all knowledge of God as Father comes to us through Jesus Christ. What He said in His prayer was indeed true: 'I have manifested unto them Thy name' (John 17:6) - and that name was 'Father'. Do you want to know God? Do you want to know Him as Father? Do you want to know what He has to say to you, to make known to you? Do you want to know all or any of the vast wealth God would reveal to you? You can only know it in Jesus Christ; you can only know it in Him Who is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega. There is no knowledge without words made up of letters (except perhaps for our Chinese friends!), and all the letters are between these two. There is no knowledge that is knowledge indeed, knowledge that is life eternal, except in Jesus Christ. "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him Whom Thou didst send... Jesus Christ" (John 17:3). There is no knowledge outside of Jesus Christ.

And there is no communication from God outside of Jesus Christ. Set Jesus Christ aside, and God is silent - He has nothing to say to you. If you fail to give His Son His place, God is just dumb; He will communicate nothing. The more you honour the Son, the more the Father will come out to you and communicate with you.

All Need Comprehended In Christ

Secondly, Alpha and Omega not only comprehend all speech - they comprehend all need. You do not want anything outside of 'A' and 'Z'; you do not need to create any new letters; it is all there. It does not matter what big words you use - and there are some big words these days! - it does not matter how big the words, how long the sentences, or how great the utterances: you can meet the need of the biggest word, the longest sentence and the fullest utterance between Alpha and Omega. For all these big new words, you have no need to create new letters: all that you need are here.

We are told by the Apostle Paul that "in Him" - that is, in Christ - "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead" (Col. 2:9); "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2:3). "It was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fullness dwell" (1:19). We are very fond of that word of Paul's to the Philippians: "My God shall fulfil every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). Every need supplied on the scale of His riches in glory - can we fathom this, can we compass this? - but every need met according to that in Christ Jesus. In Him is all we need; He is Alpha and Omega. When Jesus says: 'I am Alpha and Omega', He is saying: 'I am all you need. You never can have a need, you never can invent or imagine anything for which I am not sufficient. No situation can arise that exhausts Me: in Me all the fullness dwells. I am Alpha and Omega.'

Christ: Agent, Pattern, And Goal Of Creation

Christ is the first and the last in creation, so says the Word. In that letter to the Colossians, to which we have just referred, the Apostle tells us clearly and precisely that "in Him were all things created", and that "He is before all things" (1:16, 19). The Apostle John, at the beginning of his Gospel, tells us the same thing, that "all things were made through Him" (1:3). He is the beginning in creation. In the Letter to the Hebrews, we are told that the ages were made through Him, they came into being through Him (1:2). In this book of the Revelation, we read: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God..." (3:14). He is the Alpha and Omega in creation: here He is the Alpha, the very Agent and Instrument of creation.

He was creation's design, for all things were made to be a temporal and material expression of spiritual and moral realities in the Son of God. If we had eyes and understanding to see the deeper secrets of an unfallen creation, a vast universe from the hand of God, we should see, in everything, something that speaks of the Son of God - His spiritual, His moral character, and His supreme place in the whole system of God. He is the pattern of creation: "of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things" (Rom. 11:36); and He is declared to be the completion, the finish, of the creation of God. He is the Alpha and the Omega.

Christ: First And Last In Redemption

All this is by way of setting the Lord Jesus in His rightful place in God's universe. But we may feel that it is not very helpful to us. What comes nearer to us is this: that He is the Alpha and the Omega in redemption. He is the First and the Last in redemption. In that letter to the Hebrews again, we have this familiar word: "Looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith" (12:2). He is, then, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, of redemption.

Christ is, of course, the beginning of redemption in this simple sense, that there is no redemption until we come to Him. Just as there is no speech, no communication, no knowledge until we come to the alphabet, so there is no redemption until we come to the Lord Jesus. There is just nothing before 'A'; there is nothing before Alpha: that is just where everything begins. And what is true in language is true in redemption: there just is no redemption, there is no salvation, until we come to the Lord Jesus. But when we come to Him, there is a new beginning. It is the beginning of everything - a whole new compass and range of possibilities, whether of communication, of knowledge and understanding, of wisdom or of pleasure.

What a wealth there is in Christ! What a wealth there is in Him as the Redeemer! When you take Him as the beginning, the Alpha, of salvation, what a marvelous world opens up! When you pick up a dictionary, and begin to turn the pages, what a world opens up! As you go on and on, through the many thousands of words, in all their different shapes and forms, what a world is there! I cannot understand any person who cannot revel in a dictionary! But you see what I am getting at. When you come to Jesus as the Alpha, a new and vast and wonderful world begins to open up, a world that you never thought of. It is like coming upon new words in the dictionary - words that you never knew were there, and that open up to you altogether new vistas. It is like that with the Lord Jesus: when He becomes your Beginning, an inexhaustible world opens up. Wealth, fullness, riches of knowledge - there are limitless possibilities when you begin with 'A'.

And there is no end to it! Just as there is something more being added every year to the dictionary, so it is in the Christian life. I am not exaggerating. My experience through the years, and perhaps especially in recent times, is that Christ is just inexhaustible. There is more and more and more

coming, all the time, that we did not know before. But it all began when we began with Him, and it has gone on ever since, and it is going on for eternity; for the Word says: "Of the increase of His government... there shall be no end... upon His kingdom" (Isa. 9:7). No end! What a kingdom of fullness His is! But we have to begin with Him, we have to make Him our beginning before we can have any of it. He has got to be our 'Alpha'. But when once He is that, I say again, a new world opens up; a new fullness - and such a fullness! - begins to disclose itself. It is all in Him as our Redeemer.

This is what we have in the first chapter of the Revelation: titles of the Lord connected with Him in resurrection. And then we have words about what He has done in redemption. He 'purchased unto God with His blood...' (Rev. 5:9); He "loosed us from our sins by His blood; and He made us a kingdom, priests unto His God and Father" (ch. 1:5,6). It is the work of redemption which has opened up everything new - wonderful fullness! He is the Alpha of Redemption.

"The Author..."

Christ is not only the Beginning: He is the Beginner. It says here "the author": "looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter..." (Heb. 12:2). He is the Beginner - the One who takes in hand this matter of beginning all over again and bringing us into a world that we have never known before. He is the initiator of it: it is in His hands: He does it. He has taken the initiative in our redemption; that is the point. I am so glad of that - so infinitely glad of that. With all that may be said about our quest - man's quest for God, man's search for God - that is nothing compared with God's search for man. What Jesus has come to reveal, and has revealed, is that God is the Seeker. Those wonderful and familiar parables about lost sheep, and lost pieces of silver, and lost sons (Luke 15), and other lost people: they are all meant to show us that God is the Seeker, that the initiative is with God. "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

Yes, He began this thing: you and I would never be rejoicing in salvation if He had not begun it. He said: 'Ye did not choose Me, but I chose you' (John 15:16) - and that is why we are now numbered among His saved ones. And if we are now among those that belong to the Lord, it is simply because He sought us. Whether we were seeking or not, He was the Seeker; He was the Beginner; He began. No one else can begin to redeem us; no one else can save. 'There is no other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved' (Acts 4:12); only His Name. There is no beginning of redemption without Him.

"...and Perfecter"

And Christ is the Last, the Omega, the end - in this sense, that, when He begins a thing, He finishes it. 'The Lord', says the Word, 'will perfect that which concerns us (Ps. 138:8). "He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). He finishes what He begins. And He is not only the Beginner and the Perfecter, but Himself the Beginning and the Ending - the Finish. God is working all things to the end that we should be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). Christ stands, so to speak, right at the end; and God is moving and working in us, His people, in relation to that One who stands at the end, that we should be conformed to His image. The servant of God cries: "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15). It is that likeness that is the end: Jesus Himself is the End. All things under Heaven's government are working towards conformity to God's Son.

Christ Makes Sense Of Life

Furthermore: Christ, as Alpha and Omega, makes sense of life. I might have a tray with all the letters of any alphabet jumbled up in it. If I know what the letters are, and I know what I want, I can put them in an order so that they make sense. They express exactly what I want to express. All this that comes between 'A' and 'Z', between Alpha and Omega, makes sense when it is put in its right place. There are many people today who cannot make sense of life at all. The struggle of many is to try to make sense of life: What does it all mean? What is the explanation of it all? It seems all a jumble, a confusion, an enigma. Jesus makes sense of life: He puts the jumble into an order.

That is a description of the Divine design, the great purpose of God: to provide an explanation of everything. Yes, in Him we have the answer to our life's problems; in Him we have the setting in order of lives disrupted and confused. Has that not been true of so many? Men and women whose lives were all mixed up and confused, distorted and twisted, without any seeming design or pattern, meaning or explanation; they could not make sense of anything. And then they came to the Lord Jesus, and life made sense: a design, a pattern came in, and they came to realize what it all meant, what they were for. That is the testimony of those who are truly His. In the Lord Jesus, we have found a pattern, a design, for life; we have found a meaning in life, an explanation of life. He can bring into life a clear pattern, a new understanding. In Him, as Alpha and Omega, we have all that we need to make sense.

Let me repeat: Until you have your letters, your basic characters, there is no beginning, and there will be no sensible, meaningful end at all. Jesus just supplies that need - a beginning and a sensible end. He leads somewhere! When you and I at last reach the end, the end in glory, it will truly be a meaningful end, will it not? It will be an end that justifies everything, that gives meaning to everything, that explains everything. The thousand 'why's' of lifetime will be answered, will all be explained. Why this experience and that? Why this sorrow and that? Why this disappointment and that loss? Why these strange ways in our life? It will all be answered in the end - and Jesus Himself will be the End! Yes, it will be a 'sensible' end. We shall have no quarrel with God then, because Jesus will have put it all straight, and brought us to an end beyond our wildest expectations and altogether beyond our merits.

God Speaks To Us, And Through Us, By Life

Thus we may understand why, in the Bible, Jesus is called "The Word of God" (Rev. 19:13). God speaks in Him and by Him; always and only, and finally, in His Son. Perhaps you say, 'That is all very interesting, but after all, how does He speak? Are we to hear Him with our ears?' No. If you come back to the context of these titles, you will find that it is resurrection life. "I am... the Living One;... I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. 1:17, 18). How does He speak? How do we know Him? How is life delivered from its tangle and confusion and brought into pattern and meaning? By His becoming our life! He makes us partakers of His own risen life. He puts that life into us which is an ordered life, a life of wisdom and understanding: a life, not of confusion, but of pattern. It is a *life-power* within us.

When His life is within, that life answers the questions, explains things, gives meaning to life. And while, to natural ears, life may be inaudible, life is really a very, very powerful speaker. It speaks louder, much louder, than words. Some poor suffering child of God may not be able to say much in coherent speech, but you have only to be with them for a very little time, and the life speaks to you. The very life that is in them speaks far more powerfully than words. It is the life that is within us which is the communication, the explanation, the wisdom of God: the power of that life working in us. By that life, God speaks to us, answers our problems.

So often, the answer of God to us is not in something that He says, but in something that He does - in some new touch of life. It is strange how, if we get that new touch of life in our inner man, we cease to worry about the problem - the problem is solved! We may not have got the answer to our *questions*, but we have got the *answer*: it is in life! It does not matter about the problem now; it is answered in this new touch of life. Life is God's way of speaking to us.

And life is God's way of speaking through us. People may come into a meeting, and they may have no idea what the speaker is talking about; and yet they might go away and say - 'I didn't understand a word, but... but... there was something there!' They may not be able to describe it, because they are not familiar with the language and the phrases and the terminology. But they feel that they meet something there - something that answers to a need. Well, if they only knew, they would say: It is life, life, life! And that is the way that God really speaks. We would sooner have it that way, would we not, than that people should be able to understand a lot of words and phrases, and not feel the impact and registration of life. Better, of course, if both; but if we have to choose, better this way - that they go away and say: 'There is something there that you cannot get away from; I can only say, it is God!' And what they mean is - it is Jesus Christ, the Living One!

That is the way God speaks through us. Oh that we may be, in this sense, the voice of God, the speech of God: the expression of Christ, Who is the Alpha and the Omega.